MUHAMMAD (P.B.U.H)
THE GUIDE OF MANKIND

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Foreward

A number of books have been written on the life of Prophet Muhammad. It is impossible to recount the number of works on the life and teachings of the Prophet as these works are not bound by any national, linguistic or any other boundary. To be true every known and even most of the less known languages have extensive works on his life. And this continues to be done in the same zealous way even today and would continue to be done in future as well.

The main reason for this seems to be the fact that despite all these extensive works, writings and biographies of Muhammad the subject still seem to offer a lot to the best minds of the world who wish to write on the man who seemed to have changed to course of the world. Even the best of writers who wrote on the Prophet's life had to admit in the last that they could not cover all the aspects of his life.

Millions of pages have been written but his personality still offers a number of aspects to be covered by authors in every age. His personality is so diverse and so complete that every author finds a new way to write on him, to appreciate his efforts and to laud his works for the benefit of the whole of the universe. The world has produced any number of people with authority, power, great stature and genius but never a legend like Muhammad who seem to encompass all the qualities found in different people in a single man.

This is not the way only we-his admirers and followers- think, a number of people who have nothing to do with him too have similar thoughts and feelings. Even his detractors often credit him with changing the course of the world in a positive way. They too admire his achievements, his mercy, his love for the mankind, and his efforts to

uplift the downtrodden.

If there is a group of his detractors who throw wild allegations against him there are any number of non-Muslim admirers who love him like anybody among us and appreciate his works for common human beings. These people rate him the most respected man ever born in the world. And the truth is that he was not only the best human being of his time alone but also of all the times to come.

He was not only the best man ever born in the world but also the greatest benefactor of the humanity. He aroused among men the humanely qualities that were rare during that period. He taught that all the men and women are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. All are equal. And there is no difference among them on the basis of race or colour.

The Prophet said, "all the races and nations are equal in the eyes of Allah, there is no discrimination on the basis of race or colour in his eyes." The Prophet also said, "He who is God-fearing and accepts His guidance is honoured near Allah and he who does not accept his guidance is the fodder of fire despite the honour he or his clan gets in this world. He destroyed any possibility of discrimination on the basis of caste or race by saying that all men and women are sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

He gave women honour in the society. Before his arrival women were taken as a commodity. They were not respected. The Prophet gave women respect. He said, "The best man amongst you is one who is best for his wife".

He also tried to stop tradition of enslaving men and women. To begin with he exhorted people to treat slaves humanely.

He gave the message of love, compassion and equality to all the people on the face of earth. Before his arrival the concept of equality among different nations and races was an alien concept. If seen in this context, Muhammad is not the benefactor of Muslims alone but that of all the people of the world for all times to come.

May Almighty bless the messenger who was all compassion and love for the humanity, who was torchbearer of light for all the men and

women and who
thought nothing but good for anyone and everyone even for his detractors and hardened criminals.

I feel it my greatest privilege over being able to write something on the topic. It is mere benevolence of the Almighty. The book, originally written in Urdu language, has been very warmly received. So far not less than seventy five editions of this book in different languages have been printed. In English however it is the first edition. I am all praise for Almighty Allah for making it this sort of success.

The sun rises

The religion of Abraham didn't survive in Arabia for long. Paganism spread again in the whole peninsula. People started praying idols with God. They thought them to be a medium to reach the God. They thought that they were friends of God and their medium to reach Him, and the fulfillers of their desires and their trouble-shooters.

Abraham was the caller towards unbridled monotheism and was totally against polytheism and paganism. But people over a long period forgot his massage and started worshipping idols. but It didn't happen all in a sudden. It took ages. Centuries went by and several generations came and gone and it was only in the course of such a long time that the paganism was able to take root in the society again.

Wherefrom this paganism came? How did this worship of idols spread? The truth is that Arabs immensely loved Abraham and Ishmael. Kaba was constructed by this father son duo and so they loved it too. This love did not remain restricted to it. The stones scattered around it too became very dear to them.

Now whenever they went outside Makkah for employment or business they took a stone from there with them. They thought that this would bring prosperity and help fulfill the purpose. Then this obsession increased. The people who settled out of Makkah took stones scattered near Kaba with them and installed it there. Now like Kaba they paced around it and liked Hajre Aswad or the historical black stone gave a peck to it.

And so the wrong notion against which Abraham had waged a

war during his whole life was revived in Arabia. There was another aspect of it too that contributed to its fast reemergence.

Whenever volcano burst it scattered stones all around. The Arabs thought that these stones were part of meteors coming down from sky. They started taking these stones as sacred because there were people who were convinced that stars were powerful because they were reflective of the prowess of the Creator of the world.

So the stones they thought were parts of stars they started taking them respectable. Later this developed into an obsession and they started worshiping those stones.

Generations came and gone till this perception grew fully. Now every beautiful stone that had some new shape would be respected and worshiped by them.

Later on they started shaping stones themselves. They carved out idols and started associating with whichever personality they thought fit, gave it a name, installed such idols at whichever place they wished and started worshiping it. In their misguided love they offered things. They thought that they would plead for them before Allah and would be a source of salvation for them.

The first idol that entered Makkah and was subsequently installed before Kaba was Huba. The man who brought it was Amr, the son of Luhay. While he was traveling somewhere he saw people worshipping idols. It fascinated him. He asked them for an idol and promised that his people too will worship it. They readily agreed and so the first idol entered Makkah.

Subsequently more and more idols came in the vicinity of Kaba. The two more famous of them were that of *Islaf* and *Nailah*. These two were installed on the site of Holy spring of Zamzam. The spring of Zamzam was long forgotten and most were not familiar even with its name.

This was not the end. Most tribes in Makkah and outside had their own idols.

Uzza: it was the biggest idol of Quraish.

Lat: It was an idol of Thaqeef, a tribe in Taef city.

Manat: it was the idol of Aus and Khizraj, the two tribes of Medina.

There were innumerable other idols too.

It was the house of Allah that Abraham and Ishmael had built with their own hands with great expectations. They had shed their sweat only to make it the greatest center of monotheism and the house of Allah. But their people forgot the message and converted the house of God into the house of idols. The greatest center of monotheism became the fountainhead of paganism.

The people forgot the message spread by Abraham. They forgot that from this very house the voice of monotheism had spread everywhere. Now it was hard for them to even think that there can be any truth beyond paganism. The father who had faced the ire of his whole community for his fight against paganism, his own progenies were for paganism.

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Innumerable revolutions came and gone in Makkah. Generations came and gone without a trace. Numerous communities occupied power and were dethroned till the power came in the hands of Qusai, the son of Kilab a descendant of Ishmael. His people from Quraish and relatives assisted him in every possible way.

Makkah thus far was a city of tent. There were no buildings made of concrete and bricks. No-body had gathered courage to construct a house or any other building higher than Kaba. Qusai was the first person who gathered this courage. He constructed a building named Darun Nadwa. He used to hold meetings of prominent leaders of Quraish there and think over local issues. He also used to seek their counsel on important issues. This building also served as court and took final decision about matrimony and other family disputes.

Later Qusai ordered people of his clan Quraish to build concrete buildings as well and they constructed their houses around holy Kaba. They left a large swath of land in the vicinity of Kaba

for the pilgrims who used to come there for pilgrimage.

Qusai also undertook and completed some works that were of great significance and were remembered for very long time. *Mashar-e-Haram* is his invention. It was illuminated during the period of Hajj.

Once he gathered people of his clan and delivered a memorable speech:

"Brothers! People come for pilgrimage at Kaba from innumerable places. They come after undertaking journeys of hundreds and thousands of miles. Looking after them is your responsibility."

He then established two posts:

Siqayah: Its responsibility included to arrange for potable water for Hajis during pilgrimage. Holy spring of Zamzam was not known at that time. Water was scarce. It was carried from long distances. Nabeez, the main diet of Arabs was also its responsibility.

The other one was Rifadah. Quraish had appropriated a large sum to look after Hajis. This responsibility was assigned to Rifadah.

Another post was also created for Kaba. It was named Hijabah. One who was assigned this job was also responsible to keep the keys of Kaba. He oversaw all the works regarding Kaba. Anybody willing to go inside the Holy Kaba needed to seek his permission. Admission inside Kaba was not allowed without his permission.

These three posts held great importance for the people of Quraish. Later on the significance of these posts increased considerably. At that time Qusai held all the three posts.

When Qusai became old and it became tough for him to look after these responsibilities that needed real tough work, he handed over the three posts to his eldest son Abdud Dar. Qusai also had another son, Abde Manaf. The influence of his children was more than the influence of Abdud Dar's sons. They decided to forcibly snatch away these privileged and highly respected posts from their cousins.

It was a period of turmoil for Quraish. Abdud Dar's sons refused to give up these privileged posts and the preparation for a

war began. Luckily they reached an agreement and it was decided that the posts will be divided among the two. In the division Aale Manaf got Siqayah and Rifadah.

Abde Manaf had a son, Hashim who was the eldest of his sons. He also wielded considerable influence among his people and was one of the richest men of his clan. His influence brought the twin posts to him.

Hashim, the son of Abde Manaf had a passionate and caring heart. He was careful about the welfare of the poor. He carried on with the welfare work of his grandfather. He served food for Hajis. It were not merely Hajis he took care of, he was equally concerned about the welfare of the poor people of Makkah.

Hashim pondered over as to how to improve the general economic condition of the people of Makkah. He arranged that every year two caravans of traders from Makkah go outside for business purpose. Subsequently every year a business caravan went in winter and the other during the summer. During summer the destination used to be Syria and in winter it was Yemen.

He was also granted permission by the emperor of Roman Empire for tax free trade in his empire for Quraish clan. The King of Ethiopia also granted a similar facility to people of Quraish following his request.

Trade routes were not safe during those days. Every moment the traders feared for their safety and safety of their goods from bandits. Hashim undertook journeys to all other clans in the area and signed treaties with them that 'they will not harm any trade delegation from Quraish. In return the Quraish traders will visit these tribes and carry items that these people need.' This was the reason as to why when no caravan was safe in Arabia, caravans of Quraish traders were never harmed or looted. They also signed business and political agreements with different tribes and countries. It made them at peace even in an environment that was full of threats from warlords and bandits. Their business and trade grew at an amazing pace.

Once a severe drought threatened life in Makkah. At that time

Hashim got breads broken in small pieces, mixed with gravy and served it to people. His name is derived from this benevolence. Hashim is derived from Hashm that means to break and Hashim means one who does so.

Hashim's this title became so famous that his original name was forgotten completely. His real name was Amr. But no one seems to have remembered that.

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Once Hashim went on a trade tour to Syria. He was accompanied by a large caravan of traders. While returning the caravan bypassed Yathrib (Medina, the city where Prophet Muhammad later migrated). There were some traders from this city too who were chosen by a lady from Yathrib to do the job for her.

When this caravan reached Yathrib, the lady came to see the people who traded on her behalf and asked for details about the journey. As to what they sold? What they purchased? Her words were reflective of her mature personality, insight and understanding of intricate issues. Hashim witnessed it and appreciated her insight in his heart. He was also deeply impressed by her dignity.

After the lady left, Hashim enquired about her. "Who was she?" he asked.

'She is Salmà, the daughter of Amr. She belongs to Bani Najjar, a tribe of Khizraj' traders gave her full introduction.

"Is she married"? Hashim further inquired.

"No. But she is a highly respected lady of her tribe. She wants a husband that will not restrict her freedom. She doesn't want to sacrify her freedom" people replied.

"Will she like me?" Hashim asked.

When asked she responded positively. She knew Hashim well and was aware of his position in his community.

Hashim married Salma during the same journey and brought her to Makkah with him. They spent a long time together before Salma returned to Yathrib where she delivered a baby boy. She named him Shebah. Years went by.

One year a trade caravan started out from Makkah. Hashim was part of it. When his carvan reached, Ghazah in Syria. The inevitable called him. Hashim died there. Now all his posts came in Muttalib's hands. He was his brother.

Shebah was his nephew. He was still with his mother in Yathrib. Muttalib was concerned about him. He decided to bring the child to Makkah as it was the place from where he belonged. The whole family of his father lived there. For this purpose Muttalib undertook a journey of Yathrib. He met Salma and asked: now the son of my brother has grown considerably. I want to bring him back. You know our position in our tribe. He will be given great respect among his people. Here he is a nobody.

'His separation will be a death knell for me. But still I will not like to keep him aloof from his ancestors. Ask him as to what he wants?' Said Salma.

'Are you coming with me?' Muttalib asked the young fellow. I will not go till the mother gives me permission, said the child innocently.

When Salma saw the intensity of Muttalib's demand, she unwillingly prepared herself to send her beloved son to far away Makkah. Muttalib spent three days there and then left for Makkah with Sheba in toe. Sheba was a toddler of eight years.

Both started out on the same she camel. Muttalib was sitting in front and Sheba was sitting behind. When the duo entered Makkah people mistook him as the new slave of Muttalib being brought from outside. The news spread that Muttalib had brought a new slave. They asked one another as to whether you saw the slave of Muttalib. Abdul Muttalib means the slave of Muttalib.

When Muttalib heard it he felt deeply disturbed by such words.

O people of Quraish! He is my nephew, the son of my brother Hashim. He was in Yathrib and I have brought him back. Despite these denials he became famous by this name. The real name was forgotten. And from then on he will always be remembered as Abdul Muttalib.

When Muttalib died, Abdul Muttalib had grown into a well-

built man, full of enthusiasm and energy. He took control of his uncle's responsibilities of Siqayah and Rifadah.

Drinking water was scarce in those days. There were no wells in Makkah. And the water was brought to Makkah from surrounding places. During the Hajj season when the people from whole of Arabia would swarm to Makkah for pilgrimage, the water was brought from outside and stored in some ponds near Kaba. Bringing the water from outside, storing this water into ponds near Kaba and then regular cleansing of these ponds was certainly not an easy task. It required hard work. Abdul Muttalib was very concerned about solving this problem permanently.

Stories about holy spring of Zamzam were still not fully forgotten. It was said that its water was sweet and tasty. And that its water never dried up. It fulfilled all the need. And the best part was that there was not any need to carry water from far o place and then storage. Abdul Muttalib thought of it.

'Who closed the spring of Zamzam?' Muttalib asked the elderly people of his clan.

"A tribe named Jurham governed this place a long time ago. The last of Jurham kings was Muzaz Jurahmi. When his people got involved in destructive works and abandoned constructive works, another clan Banu Khuzaah objected to it. They decided to dislodge Jurhams. A war ensued that was finally won by Banu Khuzaah. Jurham had to leave the place. When they could do nothing they brought all the offerings to Kaba out and with these offerings shut the holy spring of Zamzam' he was told the whole story.

'We should not take rest till we rediscover the spring, get it cleaned and it starts flowing again' he gave his decision.

During those days, once when he was asleep he heard a voice. 'Get the Zamzam dug.' This divine sound continued haunting him. It gave him more strength and increased his commitment.

So the digging work was finally undertaken. But it was not an easy job. It was an uphill task and required rigorous work. But the grit and determination of Makkans worked and finally water flew again in the holy spring.

Items recovered from Zamzam included swords of Mozaz and offerings for Kaba. There were two deer made of pure gold from among the offerings.

Abdul Muttalib used swords to build doors for Kaba and put the two gold deer on the two sides of the Kaba to increase its beauty.

The digging of the Zamzam had enervated Abdul Muttalib. It had also affected him mentally. He also felt lonely in the world. Till that time he had a lone son, Harith.

O Lord! If you give me ten sons and all grow up and start assisting me in these tasks, I will sacrifice one of them in your name.

His wish was granted. God gave him ten sons who grew up into young men and started assisting him in his philanthropic works.

Now it was time to make the offering. Abdul Muttalib called his sons and recounted the whole story to them. "We are prepared for it" O father. 'You can pick anyone of us and sacrifice him' they willingly offered themselves for sacrifice.

Write your names on separate arrows, directed the father for whom it was a tough decision. He took these arrows with him and went straight to Kaba. There he met the people who took the omen. He gave him the arrows and requested him to let him know as to which son was more favoured for the kings of Idols Hubl.

It was a common practice in Makkah and the whole Arabia at that time. People took the omen when confronted with a task of great importance. In this way they tried to know the wish of God. The priests used to twist these arrows in front of the idols in a special way. And the arrow that finally turned towards the idol was taken as the favourite of the God. The decision would finally be taken accordingly.

When the great priest of Makkah twisted the arrows from Abdul Mttalib before Hubal, Abdullah's name came out.

Abdullah was the most pampered son of his father Abdul Muttalib. He was equally loved by his brothers. But nobody could

do anything now. There was no way that could save him from being slaughtered as he was selected by Hubal, the great lord.

Abdul Muttalib brought his son Abdullah near the holy spring of Zamzam. It was the altar. Anyone who had to sacrify anything used to do it there, in front of the imposing idols of Isaf and Naylah.

It was heartbreaking news for people of Makkah that spread all over the city like a wildfire. People rushed to see Abdul Muttalib and within minutes the whole city had gathered around him. And they all were pleading against slaughter of Abdullah, his affable son.

Abdul Muttalib was confused. "I have vowed to sacrify him. It is necessary to keep my words. What should I do?" he showed his helplessness.

'If money can be a replacement then we can do it. If it is possible to sacrifice camels against him then too we are prepared' their heartbeats increased. Everyone was talking of similar options.

People pondered for hours. They counseled among themselves. Finally someone talked of a female astrologer in Yathrib who is expert in solving such intricate matters. We should ask her. Probably she can solve it too.

This suggestion was appreciated by all the people present there. People went to her in Yathrib and told her the whole story. After listening to every detail she asked. "How much do you pay if you have to seek the release of a captive or an offender".

"Ten camels" they said in unison as if they finally saw some hope.

"Draw lots in the name of Abdullah and ten camels. If the cast is in camel's favour then all right sacrify them. Otherwise increase the number of camels by ten and continue till your God is pleased" the female astrologer solved the problem. Now there was a renewed hope on people's face.

They did as instructed by the astrologer. They first drew the lots in the name of Abdullah and ten camels. Abdullah's name came out for sacrifice. Ten camels were added. But it was still

Abdullah's name. Ten more camels were added. Still it was Abdullah's name which came out for sacrifice. They went on increasing ten camels each time Abdullah's name came out.

On the other side Abdul Muttalib was trying to evoke the mercy of God. He was pleading before God to accept his sacrifice. O God save the life of Abdullah, he pleaded.

When the number of camels reached hundred and the lot was drew it was camels. People were overjoyed by this obvious mercy of God. Abdul Muttalib was greeted by everyone.

But Abdul Muttalib was still not satisfied. He got the lot drew again to ascertain there was no flaw. He wanted to confirm what God wished. When he was finally satisfied hundred camels were slaughtered and left on the spot so anybody who wished could be benefited.

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Abdullah was an extremely handsome man. It looked as the beauty was specially gifted to him. His affable personality added his charm. Everyone liked him. All the beautiful women of his clan wanted o marry him.

When the story of sacrifice spread, it multiplied his value in the eyes of everyone. Many women sent marriage proposals to him. But the prestige apparently was not for them, it had been decided by God.

He was married to Amina, one of the most respected of young women of the Quraish. She was the daughter of the head of Bani Zohra tribe.

Father sent the marriage proposal on behalf of the son. Amina's parents thought it a prestige for them and they readily agreed. They were married. Abdullah spent three days with his in-laws, as was the custom in Arab those days. After three days he returned with his wife.

Not long after his marriage, a trade caravan was preparing to go to Syria. Abdullah too went with the caravan. While returning from the trade tour they stopped at Yathrib. Here lived the relatives

of his father. Tired as he was he thought it better to rest for a little while there. He fell ill during his stay in Yathrib. His companions left him there and returned to Makkah where they informed his father about his ill health.

When father heard the news about the illness of his most loved son, he sent his eldest son Haris to take care of the brother and bring him back when he retains his health.

Unfortunately Haris could not see his brother. He could not bring him back to Makkah that could have satisfied his father and given immense joy to his young and newly wed wife.

Abdullah, far away from his father and his wife, had left for his heavenly abode a couple of days ago. He was buried there in Yathrib. When Haris returned he did not bring the joyous Abdullah, but the news of Abdullah's death.

Who knew that his journey to Syria would become his final journey, and from where Abdullah's life was saved would become his final resting ground. Yathrib, from where people had brought the joyous news that had saved his life, today gave the shattering news of his death.

It was terrible news. The death of a young and aspiring man. A man like Abdullah. Anyone who heard the news was shattered. Abdullah had got a new life not long ago and people were happy when his life could be saved from the altar. The whole tribe was mourning his death.

For his ageing father it was a heart-rending incident. He was a man of broken heart.

And for Amina, her world came down crashing. All her hopes were shattered, the hopes of beautiful reunion. It was a nightmare for her. The young, beautiful lady who was envied by every other young woman of her clan had become an object of pity. The head that was always held high was being felt as a burden due to grief and distress.

Amina was expecting a child when Abdullah died.

Just days ago, Hubal was bent on taking the life of Abdullah, but Allah saved him. At that time he had a great gift from Allah. It

was to be the most treasured good for the humanity and it was impossible that Abdullah depart from the world unless it was secure in someone's hands. Now it was handed over to Amina. When the job Allah wanted from him was complete he called him back. It was a decision that none could revoke. No sacrifice could change it.

When Abdullah died he was all of 25 years.

It was Monday, the twelfth day of the third lúnar month, Rabiul Awwal when Amina delivered a baby boy. The boy was exceptionally beautiful. It looked as if he had given a beating to the moon in beauty.

Amina informed her father in law to come and see the child.

He came running over this joyful news. He felt rejoiced when he saw the boy. It was a boy, a treasured gift in Arabia, and that too the son of Abdullah.

He was overjoyed. He took the child in his arms and then took the nascent child to the Kaba and named him Muhammad. Muhammad means praise in Arabic, the one who is loved and respected by all.

On seventh day after his birth, he invited the people of Quraish for a grand feast. When the feast was over people asked him, Abdul Muttalib, why have you named your grandson Muhammad? Why haven't you given him a name like other names in the clan?

"I wished he should be praised on skies and earth. He be lovable to the Creator of the universe and His creations" Abdul Muttalib put in words what was inside his heart.

Among better-off families in Quraish it was the custom that their children would not be breastfed by their mothers. Instead women from villages used to come, who took the children with them to villages, took care of them and breastfed them. And when they grew up, the children would be sent back to their parents and took other children. It made good impact over children's health. It

also helped them get hold of chaste language.

The days of their arrival were fixed. When Muhammad was born they didn't get any nurse. Abdulah had a brother Abu Lahab. He had a maid slave named Sobiya. Muhammad was fed for seven days by his mother Amina herself. And then the child was handed over to Sobia till they get some nurses.

Sobia breastfed Muhammad for a very short time. The nurses from the Saad clan came.

They started searching for children and went from house to house and offered their services to the mothers of nascent children. Mothers would handover the children to a suitable nurse.

All nurses got children. There was just a single nurse who could not get a child. Nobody liked to handover their child to her due to her bad health. She was very lean and poor. She was Haleema, the daughter of Abu Zaid.

A child too had not been taken by any nurse from the Saad clan. Nurses did not go near him and no one was prepared to take him. He was an orphan, Muhammad, the son of Abdullah.

Nurses had heard that Muhammad was orphan and his father has died. They didn't give a look to him. They thought it improper to take care of him. Feeding him will be futile they thought. "What will we do if we take him?" they said. "What his grandfather will be able to give us in return?" they thought.

The time of return arrived. The nurses now decided to return to their villages. Everyone was happy to see a child in her hands.

Haleema's husband had accompanied her to Makkah. "I am feeling ashamed. Every friend of mine has got a child. I alone have remained without one. I want to go and take that orphan with me. It is better than to return empty handed. Shouldn't we take that child with us?" Haleema asked her husband.

"What is wrong? Go and take the child. It may be possible that God bring prosperity to our house by him" her husband gave her his consent.

Amina was feeling let down. No nurse had asked for her child. She had seen as to how readily the children of her friends were

taken by the nurses. When Haleema came and said that she wanted to take her child Amina felt very happy.

Haleema took the child in her arms and tried to feed her by her dried breast which hardly had any milk.

But Haleema was amazed when she felt her dried breasts had become over flowing with milk. Her breasts were now filled. The child was sucking the milk and it was also dripping from his mouth.

When Muhammad was satisfied, Haleema's child too sucked fully. She had seen how her milk was not enough even for her own child and was never satisfied. He used to remain sucking the breast that used to be almost dry.

Haleema had a she camel, a very week and thin. When Amina and her husband felt hungry, her husband went to milk the camel. The onlookers were surprised. Her breasts that were always dry were full. And the milk was falling out of it today. Haleema's husband drank himself and then gave his wife for drinking. They both were satisfied.

When the night came they both slept with the two children. The night that was usually painful for them went by very peacefully. Unlike other nights they woke up only in the morning.

When the morning dawned the husband said "By God you have got a very blessed child" what do you think Haleema?

"I am also convinced" Haleema replied.

When they started to return, Haleema's almost dying she donkey left all her friends far behind. When her friends saw this turnaround, they called Haleema. O daughter of Abu Zaid, let us come to you. Is it the same donkey on which you came with us? It used to frequently halt on its way while it was coming from the village. You were always behind us.

Yes. By God it is the same.

How it has become so fast now? It is very amazing.

Now everything was blessed in Haleema's household. It was prosperity all around.

The animals grew fatty. They gave more milk than earlier. Everything was showing a marked improvement.

Two years passed unnoticed. Amina's son grew on Haleema's nectre. He used to play with Haleema's daughter. The child grew healthy in the open environment of the village.

The days of breastfeeding were over. Now it was the time that the child be returned to her mother and increase the beauty of her house.

But that was not an easy job for Haleema. How could she separate a child from her who brought prosperity and blessing to her house? She was not prepared to leave Muhammad. She desired to keep the child with her for some more time so the blessed child could live for some more time with her and so the prosperity.

She brought the child to his mother. But she had a desire deep inside her heart that she would request his mother that she allow her to keep the child for some more time.

She came to Amina and said, "I fear that if Muhammad live here, Makkah's air will not suit him. Why don't you let him allow to live with us for some more time. So he may grow up in a healthy place. He will come a little later".

Haleema continued pleading with Amina. She didn't lose the heart. Gave new and newer reasons and tried to frighten child's mother from Makkah's polluted air. Finally Amina gave in.

Haleema was immensely happy. Her brightened eyes reflected the immense joy she got from Amina's consent and she again brought Muhammad back to her house.

Now Muhammad was again in the same open and healthy air. It was the same desert, the same stones, the same hills of sand and the same old playmates. He would run and play there for hours.

Till he was five year old.

Now it was the time to bid adieu. The time to separate beloved Muhammad had finally arrived and so soon.

Haleema immensely loved Muhammad. He was the apple of her eyes, and the peace of her heart. Muhammad too similarly loved Haleema. Whenever she came to see him even after the rev-

elations began he would run towards her and would give her a warm hug crying my mother, my mother. Muhammad's separation would be tortuous. But she could do nothing now. It was necessary to take him to his house and it was not possible to delay the return of the child further.

An incident also occurred during the same days that also made it impossible to delay the return any further. Due to this incident Haleema was forced to return Muhammad to his mother as soon as possible.

Once she was sitting somewhere. Muhammad too was with her. Some Christian priests passed from the same way. When they saw the child, their gaze became fixed on him. They came to the child and saw him closely. Finally they asked Haleema as to who was the child. They talked about him among them at length.

"We should take the child with us. He is destined to be a great personality. We fully know as to what he is destined to become" someone said.

Haleema understood their intention. She became fearful as to what they were planning. She thought that they may abduct the child from her. Haleema stealthily took the child to her house though she was not sure that she will be able to save the child.

She returned Muhammad to his mother as soon as it was possible after the incident. And was at peace only when she returned him to Amina.

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Now it was the love of mother and the guardianship of the grandfather. Both of them immensely loved Muhammad. They took care of him in every way possible. When he was six year old, her mother thought to go and see her husband's grave. His final resting ground. So she started out for Medina. Muhammad was with her. One of her husband's female slave Umme Aiman was also accompanying her. Bani Najjar was an important clan of Medina. Muhammad's grandfather's maternal grand parents belonged to this clan. Amina stayed there.

When they reached Medina, she took Muhammad to the house where his father had died. She also took him to his final resting ground.

It was the first day when the child got to understand that he was without a father. It was the first day when he was unhappy.

After spending a month in Medina, Amina decided to return to Makkah and started out with Muhammad in toe.

Like husband, Amina too took ill on the way. A village, Abwaa lies in between Medina and Makkah. When they reached there her condition became serious and she could never recover. She passed away in Abwaa and was buried there itself. Abdullah had died in a foreign land. He was buried there, far away from his people.

Muhammad was an orphan. He was devoid of father's love. When he was just able to understand the meaning of being an orphan, the mother too departed. He had seen the grave of his father, now the grave of his mother too was there to see.

He was left alone in the whole world. When his mother was around then too he felt the pain of being orphan. How would he have thought when this support too came to an end?

Umme Aiman now took him in her shelter and brought him back to his home with great care. When he reached Makkah he was weeping inconsolably.

It was a tough moment for Abdul Muttalib and a big incident for him. His love and affection for Muhammad increased manifold. He wanted to give him the love of both, father and mother. His love for him increased several fold. He took great care of the child and wanted to please him in every way possible. He loved him even more than his own children.

Abdul Muttalib was the head of his clan. When he sat on his seat in the shade of Kaba, his sons sat a bit far from him in his respect. But he would allow Muhammad to come near him and sit on his cushioned seat. But unfortunately Abdul Muttalib too did not survive for long. He passed away when Muhammad was all of eight years. His death was a big blow for Muhammad. It was as painful as the death of his mother.

No, to be true, the death of his grandfather was a bigger blow to Muhammad than the death of his mother. Now he was at a stage when he was beginning to understand things. He was able to understand the true meaning of love and care. And so the pain of the separation was unimaginable. He was shattered by his death.

The tears were overflowing from his eyes. His heart was broken. He himself was weeping and the serious condition of the child was forcing other too to weep. The tears did not stop till the body of his grandfather was buried deep inside his grave forever.

The light all around

"Did He not find thee an orphan and protect (thee)? Did He not find thee wandering and direct (thee)?"

Surah XCIII, 6-7

How apt is it!

When Muhammad's parents died the blessings of Allah didn't leave him alone. It was His mercy that he got a grandfather who was as merciful for him as his own parents. And then he was blessed with an uncle who never allowed him to think himself as an orphan.

When Abdul Muttalib died, Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle took him in his loving protection. He was the son of Abdul Muttalib. He and Abdullah, Muhammad's father, were from the same mother. In fact grandfather before his demise had given Muhammad in his custody. He had also instructed his son to take care of the child in every way possible.

Abdul Muttalib had several wives. Ten boys were born from these wives. Abu Talib was neither eldest of the brothers nor the wealthiest of them. But he was most courageous of them all, noblest of them too. He was also from the same mother as Abdullah. Other brothers were from different wives of his father. So it was nothing amazing when his father made him the guardian of the young child.

Like Abdul Muttalib, Abu Talib too extremely loved Muhammad. He always kept him with himself and took him wherever he went. He took care of him more than even his own children. Why he was so much careful of Muhammad and so con-

cerned about his well being? He had experienced that the child had some great qualities in him that were not seen much among Arabs of the time. He was truthful and honest. He was noble and virtuous. His every action spoke highly of him.

Four years passed in the guardianship of his uncle. He grew physically and matured very fast. The natural abilities in the young Muhammad were now coming to the fore. When he was twelve years old he was physically strong and had considerably matured. He was amazingly witty. His knowledge seemed to be very deep.

He was still very small when seen by his age. Moustache was still to appear on his face. But signs were apparent that he was destined for something great, very big. It was apparent from his actions and his habits. He was simply genius. Abu Talib was amazed by these developments. For him he was not a small child of only twelve years of his family. He took him as a mature person and he used to discuss every issue with the child as if he was talking to a man of his own age. He also used to seek his counsel in every important issue.

Muhammad was still only twelve years old when Abu Talib decided to go to Syria on a business tour. It was long and tortuous journey. But Muhammad was insisting to accompany him and was not prepared to let him go alone for the journey. Abu Talib considering the hardship of the tour was reluctant to take him along. But his nephew was not ready to leave him. So he finally gave up and decided to take him along.

The trade caravan started out. Muhammad too was with the caravan. Whatever he saw on the way, he tried to discuss that with others and seemed to have stored that in his memory.

After a long and torturous journey the caravan reached Syria. Traversing different Syrian cities it finally reached the famous Syrian city of Basra where it camped. There was a legendary Christian priest named Buhaira. Adjacent to this priest's great church, there was a place with large shade. Whenever Arab traders went there they used to stay at the very same place for a while and take rest there. Later they would go to local traders and bulk sup-

pliers.

This trade caravan too stayed at the same place in Basra. People were tired after the long and tiresome journey. They wanted to rest for a while before going out to meet the local traders.

Not much time had passed and people were still busy in putting their wares in order when a messenger from Buhaira came. "You should come to Buhaira's place. He has invited all of you for lunch. Arrangements have been completed for the lunch. Will you please hurry?" the messenger asked these people.

People were almost taken aback by this generous gesture from Buhaira. They saw each other in amazement. They had come and stayed here on umpteen occasions earlier but Buhaira had never met them not to talk of inviting them for food. "Why is he so generous today?" they thought.

Finally they accepted the invitation. After all there was no ground for refusing the invitation. All of them guided by the messenger proceeded towards his place. Only Muhammad was left behind. He did not go there, as he was a child.

Buhaira warmly greeted his guests and said, "brethren I want that all of you have lunch with me. No one should be left".

The people of the caravan said, we all have come here. Only a young boy has been left behind to look after our belongings. Buhaira insisted that the boy too be brought to the feast. He should have lunch with us too, he insisted.

They were further puzzled. For them his invitation for lunch was an unusual incident. And now he was insisting that even a child should not be left behind. They finally asked Buhaira. "Buhaira, what is the matter that you have invited us here today. We do not remember that you ever invited us for lunch" they asked him in great astonishment.

"You have come from far off places. You have this right upon us. We should take care of you. I just wanted to fulfill my duty" he tried to satisfy them. This explanation did not satisfy the Arab traders. There must be some reason for this invitation, they asked themselves.

The messenger again went to Abu Talib's tent and brought Muhammad with him. Buhaira and all the people of the caravan were waiting for him.

When the priest saw him, his gaze was fixed at him. After the food was over and people scattered around, Buhaira came to Muhammad and said: by *Lat* and *Uzza* (the two most important Arab deities) would you tell me truth. "Don't ask me to swear in the name of Lat and Uzza", Muhammad insisted.

"Oh would you tell me everything in the name of God. Please don't try to evade any fact," Buhaira pleaded.

Muhammad allowed him to ask.

Buhaira started to ask questions about the young Muhammad about his health and leanings and Muhammad continued answering his questions till Abu Talib came to take back the child.

"What is your relation with the child?", Buhaira asked Abu Talib. He is my son, replied Abu Talib.

"It cannot be true. It is impossible that his father be alive"Buhaira refused to believe Abu Talib's words.

When Abu Talib saw the level of his information about Muhammad he told him the whole truth. He is my nephew, he told Buhaira. "And his father?", questioned Buhaira. "He died when the child was in his mother's womb" he replied again. Now you have said the truth, Buhaira felt satisfied.

"Now take back your nephew to your city. And keep him away from Jews. By God, if they see him and come to recognize him as I have recognized him they will try to take his life" the priest said.

"Your nephew is destined to become a man so great you cannot imagine. Believe me he is a priceless diamond. No other jewel like him can be found on earth" he said secretly.

He said these things as a matter of fact as if he was reading a chapter from Bible or it was something that was inked on Muhammad's broad forehead.

Then he returned satisfied, murmuring as to what he had thought was true.

Abu Talib immediately returned to Makkah from there. Everything what Buhaira had said about Muhammad was repeatedly coming to his mind.

It was the first time when Muhammad had visited a place outside Arabia. When he returned he tried to figure out as to what he had seen during his journey. He tried to analyze what he had seen in course of the long journey to Syria.

He had seen great deserts and mountains that seemed to be reaching to the skies. He had seen green fields, big orchards laden with fruits, had traversed different areas and had seen different cities and villages. He had also talked to people in cities wherever he went. He had also noticed the talks among different people about the present and past incidents and had listened these details with profound interest.

He had also seen the people who used to worship the same objects, as was the custom among his own people. He had also seen people who followed Books sent by God. He had heard that there were people who used to worship fire and people who worship idol and do everything before these lifeless objects that was solely associated with God. He had also heard that there were people who were being guided by misguided Jew priests, who used to interpret whatever they wished from the Book sent by Allah and there were others who were misguided by Church leaders who also pretended to have the knowledge of heavenly secrets.

Muhammad used to ponder on everything he had seen. He would continue thinking on these issues for hours and would repeatedly think over all these.

Who is on right path and who is misguided?, he would question himself. What is the right path from among these?

Muhammad, no doubt was of very young age. But he was thoughtful. He wanted to search the truth. He wished that the reality be opened upon him and someone should tell him that yes, this is the right path and here lies the light.

The childhood is associated with play and fun, but Muhammad always refrained from seeking fun. He never took

interest in trivial and useless things. He would think of these issues, and search for some clues that could lead him to truth.

He used to go to different markets like Ukaz, Mijannah and Zil Majaz with his relatives. These were the famous markets of Arabia and were organized in the vicinity of Makkah. These were held in the months when fighting and war was prohibited. During these months even ensuing wars were stopped. The four prohibited months were the eleventh and twelfth months and the first and seventh months or *Zi Qada, Zil Hijjah, Muharram* and *Rajab.*

Everything was available in these markets. Even goods from foreign lands were brought here for trading. Other than these trading activities these markets were famous for their literary and poetic activities too. Public speakers would try to impress people by their words. Everyone here was free to express his thoughts without any fear or prejudice. People of every religion were free to propagate their religion. There was no fear from anything or from anybody. These were the prohibited months and no one would be harmed during these sacred months.

These *sooqs* or markets would be filled by people. All sort of people from different places and walks of lives would be there. It gave Muhammad a good opportunity to meet people of different thoughts and understand what they believed. It also allowed him to decide as to who was on the right path and who had deviated from it.

He would try to evaluate all these things in his young mind whenever he was alone. He would try to keep those things in his memory that seemed to be rational to him. And about things he thought were irrational, he would try to forget those.

When he was twelve year old he started grazing goats. It provided him more lonely moments that helped him think and ponder over these serious issues. These goats belonged to his family, some were from other families of his clan. He would take these animals to far away fields. The open air and peaceful atmosphere would allow him to think more freely.

He spent his childhood and initial phase of his youth in this

way. Unlike his peers in the city, he didn't while away his precious time in trivial activities and games. At this tender age, he had all the manners of grown up people. He had the nobility of great nobles and foresight that comes only with growing age.

It is an incident of these days when Muhammad was still quite young. Walls of Kaba were being further raised. Children of his age who were carrying heavy stones pulled down their own trousers and put them on their shoulders as it reduced the burden of the heavy stones. Instead of following the act Muhammad tied it more tightly. When his uncle Abbas saw it he said, see every child has put it on his shoulder. You too should follow it. Then your shoulders would not pain. When he tried to do as was being instructed by his uncle, he fainted with shame.

People in Makkah during those days used to gather at night after freeing from the chores of the day for music and dance. It was a common custom of Arabia at that time. Stories were told and listened in those meetings. Anyone who had expertise in any filed would start telling the story and they would remain listening the story for the whole night. It was culture of those days. Once one of his friends asked him to come to such program and said, Muhammad why don't you attend such programs?, you should give it a try.

It was the time of his youth. After some reluctance Muhammad showed his willingness. Muhammad's that companion used to accompany Muhammad when he went to graze his goats. Muhammad asked him to look after his goats for that day and started to go to the venue to attend the program. On his way he heard a melodious sound. He stopped for a while to listen the music. Instead of proceeding to the venue of the program he fell asleep. When got up, it was the day and the sun was blazing above him. He returned to his friend.

How was the night? the friend asked. "What should I tell you? I could not attend the program. While I was on my way, I heard a melodious music and stopped to listen that for a while and fell asleep. When I got up it was already the day and the sun was blaz-

ing over my head" Muhammad answered.

The next night again the friend asked him to attend the program. 'Don't lose this opportunity' he warned. Muhammad started out again. While he was still on his way he confronted a beautiful song again. It was very attractive and seemed as if the sound was coming from heavens. He again set there to listen and lo was asleep again.

These were the only occasions when Muhammad had decided to attend such programs. But on both the occasion he was not allowed by God to attend them as his personality was above these trivialities. After these two occasions he never even thought of music or the sort of program he once intended to attend. He is never known to have involved in any act that could have put a question mark over his faithfulness or nobility. He was the epitome of modesty. And was an example of the highest level of character. He was famous among his people for his truthfulness and faithfulness.

It did not amaze his people even once when people started calling him as the honest and the trustworthy, Sadiq and Ameen. Everybody knew that only Muhammad could be called by this name.

He marshaled in all the games of war. When the historical and one of the most devastating of Arab wars of those days, Fijar, was fought, he too joined the war with his uncles. He had grown into a young and powerful man at that time. But not even once he used his sword or fired his arrow towards his enemy. What he would do was to stop the arrows coming from the enemy side, pick arrows falling on the ground and pass them onto his uncles.

Innumerable families were lost in this war. A number of people perturbed by the devastation wrought by the war started talking of compromise between the two sides. Finally they reached an agreement. This agreement was named *Hilful Fuzool.* Muhammad too was the part of initiative that gave the idea of compromise. He was all of twenty at that time.

In the post war period, Makkans again returned to their usual habits of dance, music, gambling and drinking. The amoral activi-

ties that had subsided considerably during the war resurfaced again. And with a bang. Casinos flourished again.

And Muhammad...he would do what he did earlier. He would take goats to far away fields. In the open and peaceful environment, his eyes would take care of the grazing goats and his heart and mind would think over and over.

It was his life. These were his interests and these had all the ingredients of interests for him. He needed loneliness to think and this provided him an opportunity to live alone and ponder over issues that he confronted in his mind repeatedly.

Abu Talib took care of his day-to-day needs. He would look after the business and would take care of Muhammad and his own children. He had a large family and worked hard to support them.

One day Abu Talib came to Muhammad and said, nephew you know our economic condition. I am very worried. Khadija gives her goods to others who do trading for her. If you are prepared I can talk to her so that you can do the trading for her. Muhammad at that time was almost 23 or 24 years.

I am prepared to do whatever you deem fit, he gave his consent. Abu Talib in fact had expected the very same from him.

Khadija belonged to a very rich and influential family. She was related to Qusai through fifth generation. She had been married to two of the richest people of the Makhzoom clan who had left behind loads of money. After their death, a number of proposals from leading businessmen of Quraish had come, but she did not accept any of these proposals. She lived alone and used to give her goods for trading to some trusted people. Her business had prospered very fast and she spent a pompous life. When Abu Talib approached her she was in search of a trustworthy man to do business through him.

"Would you like to trade through Muhammad?" Abu Talib asked Khadija.

"Had you asked me to do it through anyone I would have not refused. Muhammad is our own man, how can I refuse" Khadija said. Uncle returned to Muhammad happily and informed him that

Khadija had agreed.

A trade caravan was ready to go to Syria. Muhammad joined the caravan. Khadija's slave Maysara was also there to accompany him in the long journey and assist him in business deals. Muhammad's all uncles had come to give him a send off. They prayed for his safety during the journey and good returns for his efforts. Maysara was especially instructed to take care of Muhammad.

The caravan started out. Everything that Muhammad had seen in his previous journey was now returning to his memory. Finally the carvan reached Syria and it stopped at Basra, the city where Muhammad had stayed with his uncle. All people who were in the caravan loved him and were sympathetic to him. He too took great care of all the people who were with him. Muhammad had become fvourite of Maysara, the slave Khdija had sent to accompany him. He served him as if he was the slave of Muhammad. He would never refuse anything ordered by Muhammad.

The tour was a grand success. Muhammad as a trader proved exceptionally good. He seemed to be having long experience in everything whenever he dealt in anything. Whenever he sold any commodity he handled the counterpart with great respect. Muhammad never cheated anyone. And whenever he bartered anything with anyone he did it with full honesty. The tour was a big success and Maysara had knowledge about every deal made during the tour and the huge profit that Muhammad made for his owner. Before setting off for the return journey Muhammad remembered to shop for everything Khadija had asked for.

During the hustle and bustle of this trade tour too, Muhammad did not forget his habits. He still went out and sat alone and pondered over what he saw. He would think of different religions whose followers came in his contact. They believed in different religions, different thoughts and had distinct beliefs. Muhammad would evaluate their arguments and would try to know as to who was right. He spent hours thinking and meditating.

The place where the caravan had stopped, a big tree stood

nearby. Muhammad usually used to sit there under the shade of the tree. Once while he was sitting under the same tree and Maysara was busy in some work a priest from a nearby church came to Maysara. His name was Nustoor. He asked Maysara about Muhammad as to who he was. Maysara was known to this priest, as he used to come there for trading frequently. "This young man belongs to the clan who have the key of Kaba" replied Maysara.

The priest asked him again as to what qualities he had observed in him? " Truth, and honesty and all the clean habits. He is the epitome of good character. He spends hours thinking over issues" a mesmerized Maysara answered.

"How are his eyes?" Nustoor enquired again. The slave who was now a bit perturbed said, his eyes are broad and black. There are red lines in his eyes making them more beautiful. Nustoor who had till now decided to meet Muhammad personally said if the young man sitting under the tree has all the qualities you mentioned he can be the last prophet.

Then he approached Muhammad and started questioning him on different religions. He wanted to know his thoughts about them and how he thought of those religions. Muhammad showed that he didn't think highly of them. He himself was a Christian. When he asked Muhammad about Christianity, Muhammad presented both the positive and negative aspects of the religion of the Christ.

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The caravan returned Makkah after some times. During those days there was a place a couple of miles before Makkah called Maruzzahran. Now the place is known as the Valley of Fatima. When the caravan reached there, Khadija's slave advised Muhammad to increase his speed and said that he should congratulate Khadijah congratulation for the big success of the tour.

Muhammad sped his camel and reached Makkah before noon. Khadijah who was sitting in her balcony and was enjoying the breeze saw that a camel rider was fast approaching Makkah braving the hot sun. And the camel seemed to be as fast as breeze itself.

Khadijah tried to recognize the rider. The camel neared a little. When it further neared, she recognized that it was Muhammad and was fast approaching her house.

When he reached at her door, Khadijah was already at the door to receive him. She met him with marked love and respect and congratulated on returning from the porous journey safely. Then Muhammad told her about his journey and the sort of success he got there.

Khadija listened the details with great interest. She was appreciating his success deep inside her heart. She was feeling happy by his words. His eloquence too attracted her towards him. His sincerity and honesty too had increased his respect in her eyes. She was also impressed by the unimagined profit she had made through this tour. At no point of time any tour was so beneficial for her. This also impressed her greatly.

When Maysara came, he recounted similar details with profound interest. He was all praise for Muhammad. She was both happy and amazed by this young man. Maysara told her in detail as to how he conducted his trade, the sort of honesty he had shown in his dealings, and how he took care of her goods. He also recounted with great details the incident involving Nustoor priest and told her about the predictions he had made about Muhammad.

He also recounted another incident. Maysara said that while returning from the journey, he had two camels. And both the camels were completely enervated. I was unable to keep pace with the caravan and was fearing being left behind alone. I went to Muhammad and told him about my precarious condition. Muhammad first rubbed the feet of the two camels and then took both the camels in his hands. Now the camels started running as if they belonged to different specie.

Khadija was both impressed and amazed by Maysara's words. She even said that these were very uncommon things.

Now it was impossible for Khadija to forget Muhammad at any point of time. His great personality had captured the heart and mind of Khadija. Now she would appreciate his qualities to anyone

who met her. She would also praise him for his unmatched performance and honesty at any possible moment. Khadija now wanted to be attached with this honest and brilliant young man. She wished she could be his life partner.

This thought took so deep roots inside her heart that it became impossible to keep it within the confines of her heart. Her friends also understood what she wanted. There was a lady, Nafeesa the daughter of Umayyah in her nearest circle. Some historians have mentioned her name as Nafeesa the daughter of Munayah. Both are the same lady. Munyah was the name of her mother and Umayya of her father. Nafeesa asked Khadijah, "Why don't you marry Muhammad?"

Khadijah "how it can be possible"?

Nafeesa, "Give me your consent. It is my work as to how I accomplish it."

Now Nafeesa came to Muhammad and asked, "Muhammad for how long you intend to spend this sort of lonely life. Now you should have a family life."

He said, " I don't have any thing to afford a family".

Nafeesa, " If I say that it will be taken care of and if you are asked to marry a very beautiful and prosperous lady will you give your consent. Would you still refuse?"

Muhammad, "Whom you are talking about?"

Nafeesa, "you will not get a better life partner than Khadija. Don't delay it now. It will be better if it is done at the earliest."

Muhammad too was greatly impressed by the manners and wisdom of Khadija. He had found her exactly as he had heard about her. People called her *Tahira*, the virtuous. He too had found her as he had heard about. But to marry her? He could not imagine it even in his dream. He knew as to how she had refused the proposals from some of the most prosperous and leading figures of Arabia. "Is it possible that she will be prepared to live with a poor man like me?' Muhammad was still doubtful. Nafeesa answered exactly as she had answered Khadijah, don't worry. It is my work to prepare her for it."

Now Muhammad went to Abu Talib and told him all about it. Abu Talib was puzzled. It was unbelievable. But he had never heard a single lie from him so far so he could not refuse as to what he was listening from his nephew.

"My son it is amazing that a lady who has refused marriage proposals from some leading men of clan with great money and status will agree to marry you" he said.

He continued, but my son it can be possible. Though you do not have money. But you yourself are a priceless diamond. And no amount of money can match your personality."

Muhammad said, "Uncle I am not behind money. I have never repented over the lack of money with me." Abu Talib, with his brothers went to Amr bin Asad, the ageing uncle of Khadija. They also met her brother Amr bin Khuwailid and sent marriage proposal from Muhammad's side for Khadija. They sent the proposal to uncle and brother because her father had died long ago. Both of them gave their consent immediately. It can be said that both were prepared and were waiting for the proposal to come and give their consent.

So the marriage was decided. When the day came, all the leading figures of Makkah gathered at the house of Khadija. Abu Talib solemnized the marriage with his sermon. His sermon on the occasion shows as to how much he was impressed by the personality of his nephew. After praising the God he said, "Muhammad is the son of my brother Abdullah. He is the youth like whom there is none in our clan Quraish. It is true that he does not possess unaccounted money. But money is merely a moving shade. Muhammad is my relative and he wants to marry Khadija, the daughter of Khuwailid. I give 20 camels from my property as *mehr*. I see a great future for him." and so the marriage was concluded and the Woman of Quraish came to the house of the honest. At the time of marriage Muhammad was 25 years two months and ten days and Khadija was 28 years old. According to some other details Khadijah was 40 years old at the time of the marriage.

It was Muhammad's prime youth. He had a great personality. His constant smile had added an incomparable charm to his personality. He had a stature that was neither too long, not short and had a big head that was beautified with his curly hear. He always seemed to be in a thoughtful mood. His look used to mirror his great thought. And it always mesmerized the onlookers.

His life with Khadijah was very interesting. She was only pleasure for him. Being a brilliant and understanding lady, she fully realized within a short period his likes and dislikes and always took great care of those issues. She also gauged the fact as to what interested him, and always cooperated with him.

What were his interests? To speak truth always, to be honest in every deal, to keep away from futile activities and such gatherings and to spend time alone to think and ponder.

Khadijah understood all of these and took utmost care not to disturb his these habits. Muhammad would still go alone to caves in the outskirts of Makkah. Though he no longer grazed goats, he would still go out to far off places in the open deserts. He was more concentrated now in his pursuit of the truth. He would spend even more time while pondering the natural beauties, analyze the symbols of the God Almighty. Now he was on the same path as traversed by Abraham in search of the eternal truth.

"Thus did we show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty".

(Surah VI 75)

Was he unconcerned about the well-being and happiness of his beloved wife Khadijah? He was an exemplary husband and always took great care to keep her happy and satisfied with the conjugal bliss. He took great interests in her issues and always took care of her mood and looked after her business interests. He further expanded her business and made it a point to deal with only those businessmen who believed in honesty.

Khadijah was charmed by his manners. His constant care for her and her happiness had won over her. His company was a pleasant bliss for her. Khadijah had preferred him to some of the

wealthiest people of Makkah and had great expectations from him and she was not disappointed.

Though Muhammad loved loneliness but he took great interests in social issues. He would take interest in common people's issues and listen to their concerns. But mostly he would speak only when it was necessary. He was never seen talking uselessly and would never indulge in arguments. He was laconic and would say only useful things. But he was never boring. Due to all these qualities that were rare in those days people would give him unprecedented respect. They would always respect him and his thoughts and would follow his suggestions.

Makkah is surrounded by hills from all the four sides. Kaba is situated in the center of the city. In the early days the walls of Kaba were short and there was no roof over it. Whenever it rained water would log inside Holy Kaba.

Once, a heavy flood created havoc in Makkah destroying several buildings in the city. Water was filled inside Kaba as well and walls cracked from several sides. It was a big issue for the people of Makkah. They were deeply concerned with the reconstruction of the Holy building. Muhammad was even more concerned.

Kaba was every thing for Makkans. It was their prayer house. They had also kept numerous idols inside it. People from far of places used to come there for pilgrimage that gave a big boost to the economy of the city. It also gave them a definite superiority over people belonging to other tribes. People coming for pilgrimage saw them as someone superior because they lived in the surrounding of Kaba and were caretaker of the Holy building, the house of God. So the people assembled at a place to discuss the issue and decide as to what should be done to save the building.

"Should we demolish the building and construct a new one? If so who will do it? Who will demolish the old structure and who will rebuild it?" this question was hounding them.

Kaba is the most sacred house of God. They feared that their

demolishing it for reconstruction might invite the anger of the God. They were not able to reach the conclusion as to what to do.

But the building was on the brink of collapse. Its foundations were weakened by the flood and the fear of its felling down was always there. So there was no way but to reconstruct the building. So they finally decided to go for its reconstruction. Now there were other issues to take care of. Building should be very strong, they thought. They were now concerned as to how to procure good material and people capable to accomplish the job for them.

God was with them. So at the very same time when they were in search of good material and people to construct the Kaba, a Roman national started out on a voyage for Ethiopia. While he was passing through the port of Makkah, the ship crashed near the port. The ship was carrying highest quality of wood and building material. He unloaded the material on the shore and waited for a ship for Ethiopia. When the people of Makkah heard the news, they immediately sent people to him to purchase the building material from him. The man, who was known as Baqoom was told as to what they needed. He readily agreed to sell his goods. Luckily he happened to be an expert architect. They were in search of someone who could also construct the building. Now they had found everything in Baqoom. They asked him to accompany them to help construct the holy Kaba.

When Baqoom saw the building that was on brink of collapse, he told them that it was very easy to rebuild it. He suggested that to support the roof and make the building safeer they will have to erect a few pillars. Then it will be able to withstand cyclones and torrential rains that usually played havoc in Arabia those days. The people of Makkah wanted the same thing so they readily agreed to his suggestions. They also found a carpenter in Suleh who was actually from Egypt and had settled in Makkah. He was also called to assist Baqoom.

Different clans of Quraish divided portions of Kaba for demolition. This division was also to ensure that every clan had a role in construction of the Holy building.

When the time to begin demolition came, everyone started shivering. They feared that they might invite the anger of God. They had seen how Abraha and his army, who had tried to destroy Kaba merely three decades ago, was annihilated. He had come with a large army but was neither able to reach Kaba nor return back. The whole army including Abraha himself was decimated.

It was not very long when it happened. So the people were still not sure as to how to demolish it. But they thought that they were not destroying the Kaba but were trying to rebuild it to save it. So they offered prayers and sacrificed animals. They sought blessing of the God Almighty and his forgiveness. Then a man, named Walid bin Mughaira came forward. He with shivering hands demolished a pillar!

There was a pin drop silence. People were terrified and waited to see as to what happens with Walid. The night went on peacefully. It dawned and nothing happened to Walid. Now the people of Quraish were encouraged to act and they started demolishing the depilated building.

Everyone participated in demolition. While demolishing they reached a rock that could not be broken despite all their efforts. Now they used it as the foundation of the building.

They carried stones from nearby hills to be used in construction and started erecting walls. Muhammad and all his uncles were wholeheartedly involved in it. And in no time the walls were complete.

In the now demolished old walls of Kaba a black stone was fixed on the north side. It was called Hajr-e-Aswad or the Black Stone. Arab used to give it great significance and its significance remains as it is still revered. When anybody begins circumambulations of Kaba it is begun from it. Muslims also kiss it in reverence.

When the wall was raised further, the time to put the Black Stone came. "Who should perform this noble task?" it was a big question. No clan was prepared to be devoid of this honour and wanted to perform the act. Everyone thought that he was more privileged than others in performing the act.

It went on to become a serious issue. The tension increased and there was no solution in sight. The people who were brought together for the name of Allah were now bent on to go to war to get the honour.

Five nights passed in this manner and the impasse refused to die. The issue had boiled into a severe crisis. Clans of Bani Abduddar and Bani Adi were two of the more powerful clans in the city. They came together to not allow anybody else to perform the sacred act.

It was a tradition in Arabia during those days that whenever anyone vowed to fight to death they would collect blood and put their hand inside the jar and would swear. The two tribes performed this act. Now the swords came out and it seemed as if there was no way out except the war. Abu Umayya bin Mughairah, one of more influential and wise men of the city who was respected by all came forward and said: "Brothers! Every one of you is equal in respect and dignity. Don't fight uselessly. Use wisdom. Please accept my proposal and leave the decision to the person who enters *Babussafa* first."

God also blessed this suggestion. All the people who were prepared to fight to death accepted it. Kaba was protected by a boundary wall. One of its gates was known as *Babussafa*. Now everyone's gaze was fixed at *Babussafa* and waited as to who comes and what decision he takes. Within a few minutes they see that a smart young man enters from the gate and paces towards the Holy Kaba. When they recognized him they all cried in unison: The trustworthy! We will accept the decision of Muhammad, the trustworthy.

How his whole community respected him could be gauged from this blind faith in him. Nobody hesitated in accepting him as arbiter.

They presented the case to him and asked for his decision. Muhammad asked to bring a large piece of cloth. It was brought immediately. Muhammad spread the sheet and took the sacred stone in his hand and put it on the sheet. Now he asked the head

of every clan to raise the sheet.

The heads of Makkan clans came forward and brought the sheet to the place where it had to be kept. Now Muhammad took out the sacred stone and put it in the place. It gave great relief to all. Everyone was happy. Muhammad had solved a contentious issue effortlessly that had also pleased everybody. No one was devoid of performing this noble act.

People of Quraish were saved from an imminent war by the wisdom of Muhammad. Animosity was forgotten and people were again together like before.

Quraish completed the construction, erected stones and put a roof on walls. They opened a gate for entrance near the idol of Hubal, the 'king' of idols.

Muhammad was all of 35 years at that time. But despite his young age he was loved and respected by all people of his clan. Everyone accepted his opinion. It is not uselessly that Allah, the Almighty says in his praise:

Ye are at the highest level of moral character.

The voice of God

"And (remember) when We prepared for Abraham the place of the (holy) House saying: ascribe thou no thing as partner unto Me, and purify My House for those who make the round (thereof) and those who stand and those who bow and make prostration."

Surah XXII 26

The people of Arabia had given up the religion of Abraham and forgotten his message. They had started worshipping idols. A few people now came to recognize that what they were doing was wrong. They raised their voice against paganism. They also tried to remind others as to what Abraham had taught them. They told the people of Makka:

"O people of Quraish, sons of Abraham! Cleanse the house of Allah. Remove the idols you have placed inside Kaba. These idols are lifeless, and cannot help or benefit you in any way. They can neither see nor speak. All your prayers and sacrifices for them go in vain."

"Try and search a way of life and religion that is rational. Brothers! Torah has mentioned a prophet that is to come among you. He is to arrive very soon. All religious scholars whether Jew or Christian say the same. Renounce paganism and wait for the promised prophet. You will succeed in this life and the life hereafter", they would continue.

It was an absolutely new voice in Arabia. When Quraish tried to see as to whether who were the people behind this new voice, they saw that all of them were well-respected people of the tribe.

They were Zaid the son of Amr bin Nufail, Waraqa, the son of Nawfal, Uthman, the son of Hartih and Ubaidah the son of Jahsh.

Everybody in the city knew them and respected them for their truthfulness and their state-forwardness. These people were known to be honest and far removed from common shortcomings ailing the community. They were also totally against paganism and polytheism. They were also full of mercy for girl children. Arabs used to bury alive their girl children at that time. These people were known to save such children at any cost whenever they listened of anybody trying to bury his daughter. Later they will adopt such children and bring them up. They would also readily return the children when they grow up and their father wanted them back.

But despite these rare attributes the leaders of Quraish were not ready to tolerate such uttering. They were not able to tolerate the criticism against their adopted religion. They were not prepared to listen the criticism against their idols.

They and their forefathers had spent their lives praying these idols. How can they leave it now? It was beyond their imagination. Now they avoided listening to their talks and tried to vilify those people they had respected thus far. When it did not suffice they started calling them names and abusing them. They laughed at them and tried to make them a laughing stock.

A long time lapsed in this manner. Some of them migrated. Others converted to Christianity. Only Zaid remained following the religion of Abraham. He would embrace the walls of Kaba and wail inconsolably asking the God to guide him to the right path. He would say: "O God, had I known the path You like I would have followed the same path. But I do not know" and then he would fall in prostration.

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The four people had openly announced their belief. They did not hide anything. The people of Quraish laughed at them. The people who were respected by them for their rare attributes were now being mocked by everyone. Their attributes had disappeared

from their eyes and now they saw only faults and sin in them and their actions.

But they did not know that other than these four people, there was another young man, the man loved by them all, who also had similar thoughts as them. And he follows the same religion as followed by these four people. It is another matter that he has not uttered any word in the open. He is still in search of truth.

There is a cave, almost five kilometers away from Makka, known as Hira. Muhammad used to go in the same cave and used to spend several nights there. He would try to meditate for hours there to seek the truth.

When the month of Ramadhan came, he would go there for longer periods. It was a lonely place and there was none to disturb him. It was as quite as it could be. He would think and meditate and spend his days doing it. He would eat anything that is left with him there. At times he would come to his house to get eatables after some days and at time people in his family would bring it for him.

In this way he spent his days and nights. He would contemplate, meditate, think and ponder as to what was the truth. He would take anything that looked like good and would abandon that may seem wrong.

He would try to know as to what was the reality of this world. How it was created and who was its creator? Who made this beautiful world a reality? These were the questions that always troubled him and he was impatient to get the answers.

Years went by and Muhammad became more and more restive to get the answers to his questions. He increased his frequency of visits to Hira cave. Whenever Ramadhan came he would spend his whole time there and when it ended he would first go to Kaba and cirumambulate around it several times.

Then he would go to his family and see his children. Khadijah who was always concerned for his well-being would inquire about his health. Children would surround him. They would embrace him. The elders of his children would ask him as to where he was.

They would insist to accompany him when he would go next time. Muhammad would embrace them gently, give them a peck on their cheeks, talk with them lovingly and would ask them to accompany him in the future. He would give quality time to his children quite often. He would interact with them and would enjoy their innocent talks. He would feel comfortable after spending time with them and sharing their laughter. And he would leave for Hira cave again.

But these interesting moments could not continue for long. All of his sons died with small intervals. Qasim, Tayyib and Tahir, all passed away in their infancy. But he faced all these heartbreaking incidents with courage. He had been orphaned in his infancy and now he had to bear the sorrow of seeing his young children's coffins.

He was left with his daughters only. He had four of them, Zainab, Ruqayya, Umme Kulthoom and Fatima. When Zainab grew up she was married off to Abul Aas, who was the nephew of Khadijah and son of Rabia. Ruqayya and Umme Kulthoom were married off to Utba and Rabeea, sons of Abu Lahab. Fatima, his youngest daughter was left with him.

Though his sons were snatched away from him, he was gifted two other boys. Now both were like his own sons.

Once Khadijah went to see her nephew Hakeem bin Hizam. When she returned, she brought a slave with her. This slave was a beautiful boy and looked as if he was brought up in great comfort. Whose child is it? Muhammad asked Khadijah. Khadijah told him that this is a slave that Hakeem brought from Syria when he went there.

Muhammad said that this was not an ordinary slave and that he seemed to have belonged to some respected family. Khadijah told him that she had heard similar words for the boy and she was told that he was incidentally caught by Qeen clan who subsequently sold him in the market. Hibashah was a well-known market of the Arabia those days. When Zaid was sold there he was all of eight years.

Muhammad saw the child with great love and asked as to what

was his name. Slave: My name is Zaid.

Muhammad: Could you tell anything regarding your tribe or clan?

Slave: My father's name is Harsah and Sharahbeel was my grand father. Kaab was my great grandfather. My mother is Saadi and belongs to Tai tribe. She is the daughter of Salabah.

Muhammad asked Khadijah: Isn't he my slave?

"Why not, the son of my uncle? He is yours." Khadijah replied with her great love.

Muhammad freed the slave pronto and adopted him as his son. He then sent the news to the parents of the children and informed them regarding the well being of the young child.

Zaid's father who was extremely anxious since the abduction of Zaid immediately came to Muhammad accompanied by his brother. They asked him to free the child for any price he wished.

Muhammad said that he would leave the decision to the child. If he wants to go you don't need to pay me a single penny. But if he is not prepared to leave me, then you will have to think differently.

"It is great benevolence" they cried in unison. Then Muhammad called Zaid and asked him as to whether he recognized the duo. Muhammad told the child, if you want to go with them, you are free to go but if you do not want...the child said that he wanted to live with Muhammad and was not prepared to go with his parents.

Harthah, the father of Zaid went red in his face and said: Zaid come to senses. How can you prepare to live as slave leaving your family and tribe aside?

Zaid: they have never treated me like slave. They have given love and respect that I cannot even think of leaving them ever.

Muhammad took Zaid by arms and brought him to the people of Quraish and announced before them, "You all are witness. I have adopted Zaid as my son. He would be my inheritor and I will be his".

When Harthah saw this scene he felt that his son was in good

hands. He started weeping with joy and left the child with him with his own consent.

After a short while Muhammad's cousin Ali, the son of Abu Talib too came under Muhammad's patronage. So Zaid and Ali started living with him and forgot all their earlier miseries.

How Ali came under the patronage of Muhammad? The reality was that Abu Talib had several children and was not economically very well off. Though the life dragged on but he faced immense hardship in providing sustenance to his family. And to add to his misery, Makka faced a severe drought. Not only Abu Talib, this drought financially broke leading businessmen of the city.

Abbas was one of Muhammad's uncles. He was a well off man and had a booming business. Muhammad went to him and said: "cannot we adopt two sons of Abu Talib? He is in some problems these days and it will ease his problems." Abbas favoured his opinion. So he and Muhammad both went to Abu Talib and presented the proposal before him.

"God bless you. You can take any of my children" Abu Talib accepted the proposal.

Abbas adopted Jafar and Muhammad Ali. Since then he treated Ali as his own son and Ali took him as his father.

It was the fortieth year of Muhammad's life. He was nearing the truth he had always searched for. Muhammad's hard work, meditation and prayers were now opening new vistas for him. His heart was illuminated by the truth.

Muhammad started experiencing true dreams. Now the truth was being opened on him. He started seeing true dreams that clearly opened the reality of this world that is not going to last very long and that the lust for life is to end one day.

He now realized as to how his community had deviated from the right path and how misguided it was. He also realized as to how far it had come from the right path, the path of the guided people.

Muhammad also realized that God alone deserves to be worshipped. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe. All people are His slaves. The earth and skies are all under His command. He also realized that in the life hereafter He will reward people according to their actions in this universee and will differentiate between good and bad actions.

Now he knew those things that had kept him restless for years. The things that he wanted to know were now opened on him. Now the truth was as open to him as the blazing sun. Though it gave great satisfaction to him but also created a sort of anxiety in his heart. He was concerned as to how his people would react when he announces anything similar.

The Almighty God had guided him. He had shown him the path, that is the path of blessed people. But he was now concerned for his people who were clearly deviated from the path of God. He was now concerned as to who will guide his people, who will create distance between his people and wrong path.

He told everything to Khadijah. He expressed everything that had made him restless. Khadijah encouraged him and said that he was on the right way and that Satan cannot get control over a pious person like him.

When the month of Ramadhan arrived that year, Muhammad again went to the Hira cave. It was the time of only prayers and meditation for him. His relatives would come at times to see him and the deprived came to be showered with financial help.

And so a few days passed. Once when he was taking rest inside the cave in the morning he suddenly saw an angel. The angel was in the guise of an extremely handsome man. The angel who carried a small piece of silk in his hand asked Muhammad to read. Muhammad who was terrified said: "I don't know how to read."

Muhammad experienced as if the angel was squeezing his body, then left him and again asked him to read. Muhammad again said: "I don't know how to read."

He again squeezed Muhammad's body and asked him to read again. Muhammad who feared that the angel might again squeeze

his body asked him as to what he should read?

The angel then said:

"Read: in the name of thy Lord who createth. Createth man from a clot. Read: And thy Lord is the most Bounteous, who teacheth by the pen, Teacheth that which he knew not."

Surah XCVI-1-5

Muhammad repeated these verses and he was able to memorize them. The angel left Muhammad and returned.

Muhammad stood up. He was extremely fearful of what had just happened to him. He tried to find out himself as to who was here who taught him these verses.

He rushed out of the cave and started passing the valleys crisscrossing the hills. His whole body was shivering uncontrollably. He thought that the dreams he had seen earlier had proved true and he was able to know several real things from them and the truth he was searching became known to him. He was now puzzled as to who was the person who had just come to him and asked him to read.

Suddenly Muhammad heard a voice: "Muhammad."

When he raised his eyes, he saw that it was the same angel and saying was "O Muhammad, God has appointed you His messenger. And I have brought His message to you. I am Gabriel, His messenger."

Muhammad's anxiety instead of coming down increased further. He would see the angel wherever his gaze went. He saw him everywhere whether he saw at his left, his right, in the skies and downhills. He stood still for some time and remained thinking something. In the meantime, Khadijah sent a man to search him. But he could not find Muhammad at the place where he was usually found. She sent people to their relatives to see as to whether he was there. But they did not find Muhammad anywhere. Then they searched him everywhere but still they could not locate him.

When the angel departed after some time Muhammad came to Khadijah. Muhammad was looking terrified. He asked Khadijah to cover him with a blanket. Khadijah immediately did what

Muhammad asked her to do. But now she was frightened for him. She was now fearful as to what had happened with her husband.

When shivering subsided and Muhammad's condition improved a little, Khadijah asked him as to where he was and what happened to him? Muhammad saw her with terror inked on his face and said, "what should I tell you". Then he recounted as to what had happened to him. Khadijah was an immensely wise lady. She was not very amazed when she heard as to what had happened to her husband. She had an expression of faith and peace on her face and was smiling. Assuring him she said, "O the son of my uncle. Be happy. Continue doing what you are doing. By God who controls my life, there is nothing to fear for seeing what you saw. Who can be the prophet in this nation except you? You say nothing but truth. You give alms to needy and help them in distress. You return the deposit that has been kept with you in confidence. You invite poor for meals, and help others in right works. Allah will not destroy you."

These words from Khadijah helped him a lot. His anxiety ended and he seemed to be regaining his confidence. He thanked Khadijah for her sympathetic words. Then he slept for a while.

When Khadijah pondered over what Muhammad had told her she too felt immensely happy. But the love for her husband also made her a bit concerned. She then thought of her cousin Warqah bin Noufal and went to him to ask as to what had happened with her husband.

Warqah, the son of Noufal was an immensely wise man. He had minutely studied and analyzed several religions. At first Judaism had attracted him. Then he was attracted towards Christianity. He was an authority on Bible. He also used to translate Bible into Arabic. Khadijah came to him and told everything that Muhammad had told her. When she completed, Warqah said, " By God who controls the life of Warqah, if what you say is right then it is the same angel who came to Moses. By God Muhammad is going to be the prophet of this community. Tell him not to fear anyone and continue doing what he is doing."

Khadijah returned from him satisfied and gave Muhammad the good news. She congratulated him for the great work the Almighty had selected him to do and the respect He had accorded to him. Then she recounted as to what her cousin had said. Finally she said that he wanted to meet Muhammad. At the same time she also accepted the religion of Muhammad. She was the first person to have accepted Islam.

Muhammad started out for Kaba for cirumambulation when Warqah met him. He asked him as to what had happened to him. Muhammad retold the whole incident from beginning to the end. After listening the whole story Waraqah said, "by God in whose hand is my life whatever you have listened and seen shows that the almighty God has selected you to be his prophet. The angel who came to you is the same angel who used to come to Moses. My nephew, when you will announce the truth people will falsify you. They will harass and torture you. They will even deport you out of your city. They will not refrain even from going to war with you."

Muhammad, "Will my own people force me to migrate out of my own city?"

Warqah, Yes. Whenever any prophet comes, his people do similar things to him. If I am able to see those days I will try to help you out in every way possible."

Then he embraced him. Muhammad returned to his house. He felt very concerned. There was only one thought in his mind, "how I will be able to fulfill my responsibility if I am given the responsibility of prophet-hood? How will I call people towards the right path? How will I bring these people who worship idols near God?" It was a sort of hurricane of thoughts in his mind. He started waiting for another revelation.

Now he started waiting for the angle. The angle he had seen on that day, whom Warqah had described as nobility and on whose arrival Khadijah had congratulated him. The wait continued...and continued. But Gabriel did not come. No new revelation came to

him.

He was concerned again. "What should I do? How should I call people towards the right path? Why Gabriel did not let me know as to how I should do it. Why Gabriel has stopped coming to me". This took its toll on Muhammad's health. His smiling face was not so smiling now. It was not as radiant as it used to be.

Khadijah too suffered from similar pain. She was very concerned like Muhammad. But she tried to conceal her anxiety. She did not allow her anxiety to show on her face and tried to pacify Muhammad as much as she could.

Muhammad again started going to Hira cave. Now he started living there itself. He would worship and say, " O my Creator. If You had appointed me Your prophet, then what is it? Why have You left me alone?"

It was a fire that was burning inside his heart. He would go around hills surrounding the cave. Sometimes he would climb on the peak of the hill and wanted to fall from there to kill himself and then Gabriel would appear and pacify him saying, " O Muhammad you are the true messenger of God". These words would pacify Muhammad and he would return back.

The same condition would return again and he would again climb onto the peak to fell from there and Gabriel would appear again before him and would pacify him.

It was an immensely painful condition for him. The stoppage of revelation was proving a tortuous wait.

"Probably my God has left me" Muhammad thought.

Once while he was going somewhere he listened a sound from sky. When he raised his head he saw the same angel who had come to him in the Hira cave, sitting in a chair in the air. He started shivering after seeing the angel. It was the same condition he had experienced when he had confronted the angle the very first time. His body was shivering like leaves in a windy day. But this shivering was not even remotely connected to fear or restlessness. It contained satisfaction and happiness. He came to his house in the same condition and asked to be covered. At the very same time the same

angel came with revelation

"O thou enveloped in the cloak, arise and warn. Thy Lord magnify, thy raiment purify, pollution shun.

Surah LXXIV 1-5

This revelation cooled his heart. He was satisfied now. All his fears were a thing of past. Khadijah too was extremely happy. Her desire was fulfilled. She had been waiting for revelation and it had finally come again.

Revelations came several times after that. Gabriel continued coming to him and continued giving him the message of God. But it stopped again after some time. In the meantime Muhammad had started asking people to come towards One Single God. Opposition from his tribesmen had also started mounting. They were seeking something to oppose him, and the stoppage of revelation gave them great opportunity to belittle him. They said. " What sort of Prophet is he? His contact with skies remained for merely days. Gabriel came and then disappeared. It seems, that Múhammad's God has become angry with Muhammad and so he has not talked to him for such a long time."

The stoppage of revelation was always a very hard thing for him. These prickly taunts of non-believers would pain him a lot. He was very anxious. But it was not very long when Gabriel came again with the revelation:

By the morning hours. And by the night when it is stillest. Thy Lord had not forsaken thee nor doth he fate thee. And verily the letter portion will be better for thee than the former. and verily thy Lord will give unto thee so that then will be content. Did He not find thee an orphan and protect (thee)? Did He not find thee wandering and direct (thee)? Did He not find thee destitute and enrich(thee)? Therefore The orphan oppress not, therefore the beggar not drive away. Therefore the bursty of thy Lord be thy discourse.

It told him that the God was not angry with Muhammad and that he had not left him alone. Instead he has covered him in his

mercy.

Now the revelation started coming to him regularly. Gabriel would come to him. Give him the massage and then would tell him as to what and how he should do things.

Gabriel taught him how to do ablution and how to offer prayers. Once while Muhammad was on the hilly side of the city, Gabriel came, did ablution before him and told him how to offer prayers. Muhammad did the ablution and then Gabriel led the prayer to teach him as to how he should do it. Muhammad offered the prayer under him and then Gabriel left.

Muhammad returned to Khadijah, did the oblution before him and said that it was the right way to cleanse oneself before offering namaz. Then he stood and Khadijah offered namaz behind him.

Ali was under his patronage. He also used to live with him. He saw him offering prayers. Then he also saw Khadijah doing the same thing. He saw them bending and prostrating and reciting interesting verses. Ali saw these things with amazement. He immensely loved Muhammad and gave precedence to his words over anyone's. He used to do everything like him and would accept anything he would tell him.

"It is the first time that I am seeing these things. I never saw him bowing and prostrating. I never heard so beautiful verses." Ali was in deep thoughts. When Muhammad completed his prayers, he asked, " O brother what it was"?

Muhammad: "It is the religion of God and God has ordered to fight in this path alone. All the prophets who came to the world so far have come with the same message."

Ali was still astonished. He further asked: "what is this bowing and prostration?"

Muhammad gently told the child, "God has appointed me his messenger and has sent his message to me to guide the people towards what is right. People are on a path of misguidance and

destruction, I have been given the responsibility to show them the right path and invite them to pray the One, Almighty God. We do these bowing and prostration for him."

Ali, "This is really great. Can I also follow the same God to whom you bow and prostrate. Can I also offer prayers before Him like you do? Can I also offer prayers with you?"

Muhammad, "Yes my younger brother. You too can pray the God that is One, Single. No one is His partner. He alone deserves to be prayed. You should pray none but Him. Leave Lat and Uzza. Also leave all the idols."

Ali, "Let me first ask my father". Ali was unable to sleep for the whole night. Everything that he had listened was repeatedly coming to his mind. He pondered over everything that Muhammad had said.

When the dawn came, he said, "I believe in you and I promise to follow you. I don't need to ask my father for it. Now please tell me how to offer prayers. How should I bow and prostrate? How should I recite the message of God?"

Muhammad taught him how to offer prayers as well as verses that had been revealed so far. Now whenever Muhammad would offer prayers, Ali would be behind him.

Ali and Zaid used to live together. How he could remain behind Ali. He too accepted the new religion and started learning ervey thing.

So Khadijah was the first to embrace Islam. She was followed by Ali and then Zaid. All of them followed Islam and sacrificed everything for it till their death. These two had always found Muhammad immensely good. They had found him honourable and dignified. And so they both loved him from deep inside their hearts. It will not be wrong to say that they both had accepted Islam even before formally accepting it.

Abu Bakr followed the three. He was the son of Abu Qahafa Taimi and a good friend of Muhammad. He was very impressed by Muhammad's nobility and his chaste habits. Abu Bakr loved him a lot and gave him great respect. He always sought Muhammad's

company and took it as great honour for him. Muhammad too loved him as much and always met him with affection and friendliness. He too accepted the Muhammad's call for Islam at the first invitation. When Muhammad recited some verses of Qur'an, he immediately accepted them as true message of God.

When Muhammad invited him towards Islam and presented before him the great features of the religion, he at once spoke out words that show as to what extent he was impressed by Muhammad's personality and him invitation, "I scarify my parents for you. You have said nothing but truth and you always speak truth. I testify that there is no god but Allah and you are His messenger."

When Khadijah listened his words, she could not bear her happiness, she covered herself with a veil and congratulated Abu Bakr. She said, "O son of Qahafa: You are very lucky. You have accomplished the wealth of this world and the world hereafter. I am very happy by your acceptance of Islam."

Abu bakr's acceptance of Islam gave great courage to Muhammad and the work also became a bit easy. Abu Bakr was kind and tenderhearted. The whole tribe respected him. He also belonged to one of the most influential family of Quraish. Everybody knew him and his great qualities well. Abu Bakr was a successful trader and the God had also given him prosperity in his business. He had also given Abu Bakr a great heart.Abu Bakr used to spend a considerable part of his income on poor people and have nots. He was also known to be a very wise man and was known to solve intricate issues in no time. People used to consult him at every crucial time and seek his counsel before reaching any decision. They also wished to spend time with him.

Now Abu Bakr too started spreading the message of God. He would ask those people who were impressed by his wisdom towards Islam. A number of people accepted his call and embraced Islam. The people who accepted his invitation included great companions of the Prophet like Uthman bin Affan, Abdur Rahman bin Auf, Sad bin abi Waqqas and Talha bin Ubaidullah.

Later Abu Ubaidah, the son of Jarrah and Arqam, the son of Abu Arqam too accepted his call. Others too followed these people. Daughters of Muhammad and Abu Bakr too accepted Islam.

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Islam started spreading albeit slowly. But so far Muhammad and his companions had not started calling towards Islam openly. The people who had embraced Islam so far had also not announced their acceptance of the new religion. They surreptitiously propagated the new religion. They would talk to those people who were known to be honest and truthful. So far they had evaded the leaders of Quraish and had not presented Islam before them. They had also not opened their religion to the leaders of Quraish. Whenever they wanted to recite the verses of Qur'an they would go out of Makka and do it. Whenever they would have to offer prayers they would stealthily go to caves in nearby hills and offer prayers. There the old members would teach others how to offer prayers and teach them new verses. But it could not remain a secret for too long. Now the pagans wanted to unveil this secret and they were able to know exactly who was behind it and as to what he taught. They knew that these people go out of the city for offering prayers and that they learn new religion there.

They also knew Muhammad's call towards praying a single God and that he invited towards monotheism and wants to stop people from praying idols. But this call was a strange thing among pagans who prayed hundreds of idols.

Oh Muhammad, an orphan claims to be a prophet and wants to stop people from praying idols. Does he want the people to revolt against their old religion? How he dare do so?

It created a sort of confusion among people. everyone was angry. Someone said, "Muhammad has been influenced by jinn" someone said, Muhammad wants name and influence and that it is intoxicant and it will go away itself.

From among them there were others who got attracted towards this religion. They thought that "it was nothing wrong in

seeing and assessing the new religion. It may be possible that we could get some useful things out of that. There is nothing harmful in going and checking it ourselves". So they would come and see and when they found that everything here was good, useful and blessing, they would embrace Islam.

Abu Talib too once thought a similar thing. So he came out of his house along with Jafar, the brother of Ali. He saw Muhammad offering prayer in a nearby valley. Ali, his son was with Muhammad in his prayers. They had come far away from the city to offer prayers there. Why are they offering prayers so far from the city? Are they afraid of him and others, he thought?

He asked Muhammad, "what sort of religion is it?"

Muhammad, "Uncle, this is the religion of God and his angels. It was also the religion of all those prophets who came earlier. Abraham too followed this religion. God has sent His message to me to guide people towards success and salvation.

Uncle, you have greatest right over me. And you deserve my best wishes most. The greatest thing I could do for you is that I invite you towards this religion. You should not turn down my request."

Abu Talib, " My nephew, it is not possible for me to give up the religion of my forefathers. But all my best wishes are for you. No one will be able to do any harm to you till I am alive."

Then he turned towards Ali and asked, "You have accepted the religion. Do you know what is it?"

Ali, "Yes, my father. I have accepted Allah as only God and Muhammad as His messenger. I follow every instruction given by him and offer prayers to make him happy."

Abu Talib, "follow Muhammad as he says. He teaches nothing but good and truth." Then he told Jafar to offer prayers with Ali". Though Abu Talib did not embrace Islam himself he chose Islam for his sons. What was the reason behind it?

It cannot be understood without making it clear as to what was his attitude with Muhammad and how he treated Quraish when the issue of Muhammad came.

Whenever devotees offered prayers, goons from Quraish would come and tease them. Whenever they bowed, they would take a dig at them and when they prostrated they would taunt them. These things were increasing with every passing day. The enemies had taken it something like a sort of game. Muslims would go to valleys of Makkan for offering *fajr* and chasht prayer, these people too would go there and would taunt them. They would laugh aloud at these people.

Once their these actions infuriated Muslims. They were so enraged that the fight started. Sad bin Abi Waqqas attacked one pagan so furiously that his skull came out.

Muhammad took care not to repeat these scenes. He would try to keep Muslims away from pagans so that Muslims could be saved from their excesses.It was the reason as to why Muhammad would go to the house of Arqam whenever he would need to taught new verses of Qur'an. The hosue was situated on the peak of Safa hills.

It was three years since he was appointed the prophet. Every person had known till now as to what Muhammad taught. Every one also knew that Muhammad's influence was on the rise in city and the whole of Arabia. The number of his companions was also increasing steadily.

Now God ordered Muhammad to openly call towards His religion. He was ordered to do everything openly now.

The first call

For three years Muhammad used to call towards the religion of God individually. Then God ordered him not to be afraid of anybody and call towards His religion fearlessly. He was also asked to begin this task from his immediate relatives. Muhammad was also advised not to be unduly concerned about those who do not accept his teachings.

Muhammad followed the instruction to the fullest. He stopped going out and started spending most of his time in his house pondering as to how to begin the mammoth task. He would think as to what to do and how to convince his relatives?

It was something that could not be hidden from people. Within days the news spread among all his relatives. When his aunts came to know that Muhammad is not moving out of his house and spending whole time inside his house, they became concerned as to what happened to him. Is he in some trouble, they thought? They came to him and asked as to what had happened to him? Why have you stopped going out of your house?, they enquired.

"Dear aunts, though our people accept God, they also pray idols. Can they please God in this way? This road leads to nowhere but destruction. God has asked me to warn them against doing it. I want to tell them that they should stop it. How should I do it? I want to call them for a meal and then warn them against praying anyone but God" Muhammad said.

"There is nothing wrong in it. Call them for a feast. But don't call your uncle Abu Lahab, he would never listen to you" they said.

Muhammad arranged for meal and called all his relatives. Besides all his relatives he also called Abu Lahab, despite the suggestion from his aunts against it. Muhammad knew from the very beginning that Abu Lahab was always against him. A number of people came for the meal. All his uncles were also present on the occasion. Muhammad had thought that he would talk and invite these people towards the religion of God after the feast was over.

But Abu Lahab had his plans. He thought that it is a good occasion to corner Muhammad. "He has left the religion of our forefathers and has invented a new religion. Therefore he should be threatened against doing it. Luckily all the relatives are also here," he thought. So he immediately stood up and said, "Muhammad these are your uncles and cousins. So you should talk nothing but what could please these people. You should give up what you have started recently. You have been claiming that the religion of your forefathers was wrong and people who follow that path are misguided ones. I warn you against your new religion. It is not good. You want to create problems for your brothers."

"You should know that you and your people have no power when compared to the might of Arabs. If you still don't leave your religion, your brothers would have every right to stop you from doing it. They would also have every right to imprison you. They can digest it but cannot tolerate that Quraish and whole of Arabia go against you" he said in a threatening note.

Muhammad thought to speak something and call people towards the right path, the path of Abraham and Ismael. He wanted to warn people against defying the orders of God. He also wanted to pinpoint as to what wrongdoings they were involved in and what could be the result of these wrongdoings. But the din created by Abu Lahab did not give him any chance. Trying to infuriate people he continued his diatribe against Muhammad, "By God it is very bad. You should stop him now. Why are you waiting that someone else stop him? You may get in some great trouble at that time. If you surrender him to others everyone will laugh and if you would try to take his side all of you would be killed."

Safia, one of his aunts too was present on the occasion. These words infuriated her. She said, "O brother, why have you become so blind in the enmity of your nephew.? You and everybody has heard that a prophet will descend in the family of Abdul Muttalib. You should know that Muhammad is that promised prophet."

Abu Lahab laughed at her and tried to ridicule her saying, "It will be we who will have to fight if Quraish did not like what he says. Where will we go if other tribes too agree to help them? We will be reduced to ashes".

Abu Talib, "why are you becoming so coward. We will help him till we are alive."

Abu Lahab who now feared that Abu Talib's word would attract relatives towards Muhammad induced people to go out. And Muhammad could not say anything on that day.

He again invited people for a feast after sometime. When the meal was over Muhammad said,

"Watchman does not speak false. By God, I cannot lie with you. I cannot misguide you. God knows that I am His messenger. He has specially sent me before you, though I am His messenger for the whole world. By God you would die like you go to sleep and then would be resurrected as you awake from the sleep. Then you will have to account as to what you did in this world? You will be rewarded for your good deeds and punished for your wrongdoings. Then there will be an everlasting paradise or an everlasting hell. Listen, no one in Arabia has brought anything better than what I have brought to you. I have brought the success of both the worlds to you. Your Creator has ordered me to call you towards Him. Is there anyone who would help me in this task and continue to work for it even after me?"

After these few words Muhammad stopped and waited for people's response. He started looking at the face of people to see as to who chooses to help him and whose heart is opened for the religion of God.

But there was no sound from anywhere. A pin-drop silence seemed to have enveloped the place. There were people who were

gazing at Muhammad in amazement and some others were thinking to leave the place.

In the meantime, a small child of almost 13 years stood up courageously and said, "O Prophet of God, I am with you and I would help you in every possible way. I would give up my life for you and for God".

It was a strange occasion. People laughed at it. Some said, "O Abu Talib, you should see. Your son has also become mad."

And so ended the second meet. Nothing came out of these two meetings. But Muhammad was not hopeless. He continued his work. One day Muhammad climbed the peak of the Safa Hill and cried, beware, beware! It was a custom in Mecca that whenever people saw something dangerous, they would climb on the hill and would warn people against the danger.

People started looking around and enquired as to who was calling? It is Muhammad, he is calling from the top of the Safa hill' several people said in unison.

Within no time a large number of people gathered near the site. Everyone was asking as to what was the danger and what Muhammad had seen?

"If I say that a large army of enemy is about to invade you from behind these hills, will you believe me?" Muhammad asked.

"Why not? We have no reason not to believe your words. We have never heard any lie from you", people said.

Muhammad, "my dear brothers and respected elders, I warn you against an impending threat. It is before you. I see it as clearly as I am seeing the other side of the hill."

"O people of Quraish, protect yourself from the anger of God. Protect yourself from the hell fire. No one would be able to save you from this fire if God gets angry. There is only a single way to protect you from hell fire. And it is that you accept God as the One and Only to worship and accept me as His messenger", Muhammad continued.

Abu Lahab's face went red with rage. He stood up angrily and said, "you be destroyed. Had you called us only for it?"

Muhammad was amazed. He saw towards Abu Lahab hoping that he may keep quite for a few minutes so he could say what he wanted to say and call them towards what was the right and true religion. But he did not give any heed. His style became more harsh and his words worse. Finally people started leaving the venue. When they left the site people were saying, "Oh, the grandson of Abdul Muttalib talks to skies. Why doesn't he allow us to talk to God to whom he talks? Why does he ask us to pray a God that is invisible?"

It was a long time since Muhammad first called people towards God. Muhammad would either bring his companions to his house or the house of Arqam where he would teach new verses to his companions. The literate ones among his companions would write down the verses and the people who did not know how to read or write would be taught these verses by heart. Those would further teach these verses to their children and other people who embraced Islam.

And slowly the message of God spread. The number of Muslims increased in Mecca. But the pagans laughed at the religion. They were not prepared to believe that it is a godsend religion and it is not possible to stop the wind. They only thought them as mad and thought that it is useless confronting the mad people.

They also thought that the people who have embraced Islam have done so after being impressed personally by Muhammad. But it is not going to last for long. They will get back to their original religion, the religion of their forefathers within days when this heat subsides.

It was a coincidence of sorts. Once while Muhammad was passing through Kaba, he saw some pagans prostrating before idols. Muhammad felt so much sympathetic for them that he could not control himself. He thought that these poor people must be stopped from it and they must be saved from this insult and dishonor. So he said, " O people of Quraish! Have you completely forgotten the religion of your great grandfather Abraham? Have

you fully abandoned his religion? Why have you started making these worthless idols the partners of God? How much angry God must be with you!"

This hard talk annoyed pagans. They started arguing with Muhammad and said, "you are mistaken if you believe that we pray these idols. In fact we love God and want to please him. These idols are merely means to reach Him."

"If you really want to please God then accept my words, God will also started loving you in turn" Muhammad told them.

Muhammad's these words infuriated pagans beyond any bound. They said among themselves "for how long he and such words would be tolerated. For how long we can tolerate him? How can we remain silent? Now he is claiming that we and our gods are misguided. We cannot bear it any longer."

They stood up and left the place. They all were very angry. Now Muhammad was the only issue in Mecca and people were planning to torment Muhammad.

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All the leaders of pagans one day sat together to sort out the issue. "Muhammad is crossing every limit. He is now pointing fingers at our gods. What should we do? He wants to eradicate our religion. He also tries to be little our idols, the idols whom we worship and who are gods of our forefathers.

Does Muhammad think that we are fools and so he asks us to leave our idols for whose worship the whole of Arabia comes here? Does Muhammad want that the other tribes of Arabia attack us or wants that they boycott us socially and stop doing trade with us and we become beggars?" they said.

They remained pondering for very long. Then they decided to send some people to Abu Talib and ask him to stop Muhammad from belittling their gods. He should not say anything against our gods and we will not say anything against him in return.

Later some leading figures of Quraish went to Abu Talib. The people who went there included Abu Sufyan the son of Harb, Utba

the son of Rabia, Walid the son of Mughaira, Aas the son of Wail, And Amr the son of Hisham. It was the same person who later came to be known as Abu Jahl (father of ignorance). All these people went to Abu Talib and put their argument before him. Abu Talib talked to them with great wisdom. These people returned satisfied. Days went by. The Prophet continued his task. He would ask people not to pray anyone except, the One and Only God. And so a considerably substantial number of people embraced Islam.

Now the pagans felt scared. What will happen to them if Muhammad and his religion spread further? What will become of them? Wouldn't we be destroyed? We will also lose our booming business.

Now they thought that they should decide the issue for once and always. They came to Abu Talib once again.

"Abu Talib! You are our elder. We immensely love and respect you. Please do justice in case of your nephew. Please stop him from denouncing our gods and goddesses. Ask him not to defame our gods and not to brand our forefathers as misguided. Please warn him against doing these things. Otherwise please do not come between him and us. We will then see as to what we can do. We know that you too are fed up with him and his talks. Then you will also be at peace of mind". Abu Talib could not say anything in response so Muhammad was asked to come. When he came, Abu Talib said, " My nephew, these elders of the tribe have come to me. They have some complaints against you. You should not say anything against their gods, in return they would say nothing against your God."

"Should I stop calling them towards something that is beneficial for them", Muhammad asked?

"What is that", Abu Talib enquired?

"If they say only a single sentence from their lips the whole of Arabia would be under their feet and they will be masters of all of Arabia" Muhammad said.

"By your father. What is that sentence? Not one we are ready to say tens of sentences like that" asked Abu Jahl.

"Say that there is no god but God. The whole universe and its joys and delicacies will be for you. You will be ushered with blessings of God and will succeed not only in this world, but in the Hereafter" Muhammad said.

They got infuriated. They left the place saying, "God destroy you. See what we make out of you."

Muhammad's religion was spreading at a rapid pace. The best of people the Mecca had were increasingly being drawn towards Islam. This rise of Islam perturbed the Meccan leadership no bound. It was a terrible thought for them that their idols were being belied before them. They knew that the worship of the One and the Single God will destroy the very foundation of paganism. Islam's rise was nothing but the fall of their religion. It increasingly angered the pagans of Quraish. They vowed, "we are open swords for Muhammad. We will terrorise him in every way possible. We will create fear in his heart. We will not stop at it. We will also attack him bodily and injure him and we will not rest till we destroy his religion."

They tried to infuriate their poets against Muhammad and pitted them against him. They deployed these poets to belittle Muhammad and his teachings. Poets at that time had great influence among common people. They could make and destroy the reputation of anyone through their poetry. These poets induced by their leaders now tried their every bit to destroy the great reputation that Muhammad enjoyed in the society. They would try to create confusion in the minds of common people. They would also question his wisdom and would say that Muhammad was under the influence of magic. Someone would claim that Muhammad is doing it to get fame.

Once some leaders of pagans gathered near the Holy Kaba. Muhammad was their obvious talking point. They said, "Muhammad says that when we die we would be resurrected and would be compensated for what we do in this world. We would be

rewarded for our good actions and would be punished for our wrongdoings. If we do good works our abode will be paradise and if we involve ourselves in wrongdoings then the hellfire would welcome us".

They then thought that they should call Muhammad to argue on the issue. If he is right in what he says, he will put some points in his favour, and if all this is false then he would do nothing but claim. If this is mere claim then we will be free to terrorize him as much as we could. In that case no one would be able to question us for that.

They immediately sent a man towards him. When the man came to Muhammad, he thought that they have been convinced by his teachings and want to embrace Islam. Hoping this Muhammad rushed to them. But there was nothing positive in them. Theirs' were the same heart breaking taunts, the same insistence and hate.

They said, "We have never heard about any person in Arabia who had tormented his people like you. You tried to project shortcomings in our religion and have done everything to belittle our gods. You have called our forefathers a bunch of misguided people. You have divided our whole tribe. Has there left anything that you have not tried to destroy the tribe? You tell us. But listen, we are still ready to accept you back. We are ready to give you fame, riches and leadership. Tell us if you need lots of money. We will bring great fortune for you. If you want fame we can even accept you as our leader. And if you have been affected by some mental disorder we can arrange the best available treatment for you. We will pay for your medical expenses.

It was a shockingly terrible attack on Muhammad's wisdom and intention. It hurt him beyond anyone's imagination. He said, "I don't want money or fortune. I don't need fame or leadership either. I am only messenger of God. He has sent me to you to warn against apathy and indifference and warn you against your wrongdoings. And to announce the reward for good action and righteousness."

Muhammad's these words got an absolutely negative response

from the people around him. It created a din there and everyone said what he pleased. They also made baseless demands from him saying, "If you are the true messenger of God then fulfill what we demand. Then we will believe and we would follow you."

Someone said, "ask your God to start a spring, a spring whose water is sweeter than the water of holy spring of Zamzam, and rivers start flowing in our deserts like they flow in Iraq and Syria."

Some other said, " if you are a prophet then you should ask your God to keep you in great palaces and provide you great treasuries of gold and silver so that you could spend a satisfied life. Why do you struggle in market like we do? Why do you spend so much time on earning a livelihood like us?"

Another said, "there is a man in Yamama who teaches you all these things. You listen! we are not going to accept your God, the Merciful. You should walk up to skies and bring a written directive from there that we could read."

Someone else said, "Angels are daughters of god. We worship them. Now if you bring god and angels before us or cut the sky into pieces then only we would accept that you are prophet."

"Holy is my God. I am nothing more than a messenger", Muhammad said.

Those people now said, "O Muhammad, listen, we presented several proposals before you, but you did not accept any. We wished several things but you did not give them a thought. Now we cannot bear it any longer. From now onwards we have every right to behave with you as we wish. Listen we would not feel satisfied without taking your life. Now either it will be you or we."

Now they decided to eliminate Muhammad. It was their last and final decision.

"But how Abu Talib would react? It will create fire in his heart. And his anger means that all of Abdul Muttalib's sons will go against us. And these people are the leaders of Quraish. What will be their reaction?" they thought.

They lost every courage with these thoughts.

But one thought came to their mind. Why don't we think of a

way that Muhammad loses importance in his eyes so that he does not react angrily in case we eliminate him?

They thought on this proposal for several days, and then an idea came to their mind. They thought "that they would give Abu Talib a young, smart and brave man of the clan and they would ask him to hand over Muhammad to them in return."

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They were very happy to reach this novel idea. Finally they came to Abu Talib and said, "This is Walid, the son of Umara. He is the bravest and smartest youth of Quraish. He will be your son from today and would assist you in your every task. Now please keep him with you and hand over your nephew to us in return. We will eliminate him. He has revolted against our system and our gods and has divided our nation. And you are in no loss after all. You are getting a better alternate."

Abu Talib was astonished by their outright silly suggestion. He could not believe that the leaders of his tribe could talk so senselessly. Perplexed he saw their faces for a while and said, "O fools who have lost your minds. How bad business deal you are giving to me. You want that I keep your son and feed him and hand over my own dear son to you so you could kill him in pieces. O fools it cannot happen in my lifetime."

Mutim, the son of Adi said, "By God, we have tried every bit to do justice with him. We did not want to do anything that could disturb you. Bu now I am seeing that you are not ready to come to any agreement with us."

Abu Talib, "by God, the tribe has not done any justice. I see that you have tried to dishonor us. You have decided that you will incite people against us. Now you are free to do whatever you want."

"We have not done even least injustice, neither with you nor with your nephew. We asked you to not allow him to do whatever he is doing. But you never stopped him. Now listen if he speaks anything against our gods or says anything against our forefathers

we will not tolerate. Now there are only two conditions, either you stop him talking from what he has been speaking for long or we will be forced to take action. We will take action against him and you and everyone who helps him. Now the water has crossed all limits. We cannot tolerate it any further," said the leaders of Quraish unanimously.

They left after saying these words. It was a critical time. Abu Talib was very unhappy. It really pained him. This open challenge from his own tribesmen had shattered him. He was not prepared to seek the animosity of his own people. But it was also not easy to leave the nephew helpless. It was a great trial. Abu Talib was in two minds. What to do?

"What would you do Abu Talib now? Will you leave your nephew helpless? Would you allow him to be eliminated by your own people or will give up your life fighting for him" Abu Talib asked himself?

It was a critical juncture. The history waited as to what was to happen.

Abu Talib finally decided to call Muhammad and ask him to stop from what he had been propagating, the teachings that had infuriated his own tribesmen and had divided Quraish.

Muhammad came to his uncle. Abu Talib told him everything. He also told him as to what Quraish had challenged. He then said, "O life of your uncle, be merciful on yourself and me. Don't put so much burden on me that I could not bear."

Muhammad listened to the words of his uncle about whom he had no doubt that he loved him immensely. He was being asked as to what he intended and what had he decided?

He decided what was the decision of his God. He liked what contained the pleasure of his God. He, with great courage pronounced words that would be remembered till the world lasts. He said, "Uncle, by God, if they put sun in one of my hands and moon in the other hand and then ask me to leave this work, I will not abandon it. Either this work will be accomplished or else I will give up my life for the cause".

Such was the ferocity of his words and his commitment for the cause he cherished.

Muhammad was on the right path. His life was for truth and for it he was prepared to give up his life.

Uncle was amazed at the commitment of his nephew. His resolution and determination impressed him greatly. He went into serious thought. He thought that his nephew is so much committed for this cause that he does not care as to what problems he may have to face. He doesn't fear the consequences. He is not concerned as to what his tribesmen would do to him.

Meanwhile Muhammad stood up and left the place. Though he tried his best to stop the flowing tears but couldn't. Abu Talib's these words had greatly disturbed him. "Now his uncle too has left him alone. He has lost courage to help me. How has he decided to leave me alone? The uncle who always gave me helping hand in every crisis has left me alone in this cyclone" he thought.

He had hardly gone a few steps that Abu Talib called him. Muhammad went back to his uncle. Abu Talib said, "Nephew do whatever you want. I am with you till my death".

These words from his uncle's mouth gave him immense happiness. His face started glowing like gold. Now he felt a new courage and determination in him. "Let pagans do whatever they want. We can give up our life for this cause. We will not stop till God's religion spreads in all parts of the world" he said to himself. It was his courage and determination.

Now the uncle was prepared to assist his nephew in every possible way. He called all the members of the clan and said, brothers, "How unfortunate is it that all these people have started opposing Muhammad blindly. They are bent on to eliminate him. It is a question of our honour. It is an open challenge for us. See that their wish is never fulfilled. We should help and assist Muhammad in every way possible."

These words from Abu Talib's mouth created a new enthusiasm among the people of the clan. Everyone assured Abu Talib of his or her help and assistance. Only Abu Lahab openly opposed it

and said that "he was with Quraish. I will assist Quraish against him."

Now Quraish openly started opposing him and his companions. They started thinking new and newer ways to deter him from continuing his call. They also tortured him in every way possible. These torturous tactics were not merely restricted to Muhammad. They targeted everyone who claimed to be with Muhammad. But nothing could deter Muhammad and his companions from following what they had adhered to follow.

Cyclonic struggle

Now the pagans had decided to do everything that could disturb Muhammad and his companions. They would torture them, call them names and throw stones at them without any provocation. They would do this all without any sign of shame or remorse. It looked as if they had nothing to do with nobility.

Ruqayya and Umme Kulthum were two of Muhammad's daughters. Both were married to Utba and Rabia, the sons of Abu Lahab. These two sons too were not much behind their father in the animosity of Islam, Prophet and his companions. Both these sons of Abu Lahab did everything to destroy the peace of minds of the two young ladies, the daughters of the Prophet. They would use harshest of words for Muhammad before the two sisters to irritate them. Abu Lahab apparently not satisfied by these tactics asked his sons to terminate the marriage. So both the daughters were returned to the Prophet.

Abu Lahab was the immediate neighbor of the Prophet. At times he would throw filth at Muhammad's door. Sometimes he would even through night soil there. His wife Umme Jameel did not lag behind him. She would put thorns in the way of the Prophet.

It was the way the enemies were trying to perturb Muhammad. But even at that time he did not allow himself to be swept away by emotions and do the same to them as they were doing to him. Instead he would answer their torturous actions with magnanimity and good gestures. They would do anything but he wouldn't answer in the same kind. He would bear it with great courage. When he would become

very disturbed he would just say, "What sort of treatment you are doing to your neighbor, O sons of Muttalib."

Quraish had decided to eliminate him. But when they saw that Bani Hashim and all the families belonging to Abdul Muttalib have united against any move of this sort, they lost courage to carry out their heinous operation. So finally they decided to put this plan on the backburner. But they did not leave their taunting and hurtful comments. Whenever they would find him they would pass hurtful and nasty comments or at least laugh at him. Trying to hurt him they would say, "Why hasn't anything come from God?" They would taunt him saying, "Tell us Muhammad, wasn't there anyone who could be appointed a prophet of God? There are numerous leaders who are wiser and wealthier than you."

Or they would create noises so he may not be able to talk to anyone. They would also laugh whenever they saw economically and socially weak Muslims. They would pass ludicrous comments at them, "See they are the masters of the world and they are going to win Rome and Persia!"

Abu Jahl was the greatest enemy of Muhammad and his companions. His animosity for Muhammad and Islam had blinded him from any trace of nobility and humanity. He was prepared to do anything, unmindful of how low it was. He would call him names and abuse verbally whenever he would find Muhammad and his companions. Whenever Muhammad offered prayers, he would laugh at him with some other goons. Whenever he would try to reach out to others with his religion Abu Jahl would intervene. He used to say to his friends, a bunch of goons, "you cannot be at peace without eliminating Muhammad."

One day his blind animosity led him tell his friends, "By God tomorrow I will bring a heavy rock and I will throw that at Muhammad when he would go for prostration. I do not care whether you will be with me or abandon me. I am prepared to bear any consequences from Aale Manaf,"

His friends assured him for their full cooperation. "How can we abandon you? Be assured of all our help in this work" they

assured him.

When it dawned, Abu Jahl brought a heavy rock with him and waited out of Kaba for Muhammad to come. His friends too gathered with him. Like his daily schedule, Muhammad came to Kaba to offer his Chasht (prayer after sun has risen) prayers. Muhammad used to offer this prayer in Kaba as the pagans of Mecca also offered it.

While Muhammad was offering the prayer near the Black Stone, Abu Jahl brought the stone near him and when Muhammad prostrated he came forward to throw it at him. His friends were intently gazing him as to what happens.

It was a strange sight. An enemy of the religion of God was going to eliminate the person who was praying before God. He was going with the purpose to kill the Prophet and destroy the religion of God from spreading further. But he had apparently forgotten that God himself was his guard.

His friends were intently seeing him. Their heartbeats had increased. But they were amaged when they saw Abu Jahl returning with his stone in his hands. His face bore the expression of terrible terror. His cohorts were amazed at the turn of events. They came forward in astonishment and asked, "What happened? Why are you looking so much terrified?"

Abu Jahl trying to regain his breath says, "Aren't you seeing anything? See it is a terrible fire in front of us. Had I gone a little more forward I would have been consumed by the fire?"

His friends were amazed as to what Abu Jahl was saying. They thought that he has changed his mind and he is not prepared to face the consequences. One of his friends who was also there decided to do it himself. So he took that rock in his hands and proceeded towards Muhammad a bit. He hadn't taken more than a few steps that he too returned. People saw that he had the same terrible look as Abu Jahl. Fear was written wide on his face. It was apparently the help of Almighty God. All plots and conspiracies of pagans remained ineffective.

It was not merely a lone incident of the sort. Quraish conspired to kill Muhammad innumerable times and in different ways,

but every time Muhammad was saved. Their efforts were always defeated. But still they didn't give up and did not lose hope. When they were not able to do harm to him they trained their guns at the weaker Muslims. They would seek solace by torturing those innocent souls. And Quraish were not alone in doing so. A number of other tribes were doing the same thing with people who had accepted Muhammad's message. These tribes had gone for an agreement among them. And according to this agreement no tribe would give refuge to Muslims. And it was duty of every tribe to torture every Muslim to whom they could find. Muhammad and his companions should be beaten up, be insulted and should be disgraced. They should not give heed to any-body who questioned this attitude and pointed a finger at them. The nature of this torture would become squarely inhumane when the person who accepted Muhammad as Prophet was a slave. In case of slave no mercy was permissible. He should be tortured to the extent that either he died or returned to the old religion.

These torturous tactics increased with every passing day. There were people who crossed every limit of torture as if they had no heart in their chests and instead had a stone there. The extent of inhumanity and torture could have trembled anyone. They would beat Muslims, put them inside a room without giving them anything to eat, they would put them on the sand in the desert of Arabia at a time when the sand was as much hot as to bake bread could on it. They would mark their bodies with a hot iron. They would be dipped in ponds beside anything that they could think would make them repent.

The result was apparent. Those people who were not very strong in conviction denounced the new religion. Though such people were very few. There were others who due to increasing ferocity of torture publicly denounced Muhammad's religion but by heart they were still Muslims. But a number of people were those who despite all these torturous tactics of the pagans remained steadfast in their decision and faced these torturous tactics with great conviction.

Among such people were Yasir, his wife Sumayya and son Ammar. The trio was very poor and was one of those who had embraced Islam in very early stage. The enemies of Islam would uncover them in the noon, they would bring them on sands in the open, throw them in fire, dip them in ponds. Once while they were being given such treatment, Prophet of God passed from there, he said comforting them, "be patient, for your abode is paradise".

Yasir passed away in a similar manner. Sumayya was killed by Abu Jahl. He was always behind her trying to torture her at any point of time. Once she answered him in words. Abu Jahl was so blinded by rage that he killed her by using lance. She died on the spot. Sumayya was the first martyr in the way of God.

Ammar would be forced to wear vast made of iron. Then he would be left on the sand in the afternoon or beaten so much that he would faint. But despite all these torturous tactics and loss of his parents his determination did not come down.

Khabbab was one of those people who were worst sufferers of the pagans' torture. He was the slave of Umme Anmar. She would mark his body by burning with hot iron. She would keep burning iron rod on his head. Once she burnt charcoal and put him on burning coal. The fat that flew from his body extinguished the burning coals. When Khabbab complained the Prophet prayed for him saying, "O God, please help Khabbab".

Umme Anmar was given punishment in kind. She took ill and complained of permanent and sever headache. The physician prescribed that she mark her head by a burning rod. So Khabbab used to treat her in this way. He would first burn the iron rods and then mark her head with that burning rod.

Bilal was also one of such people. He was from Ethopia and was slave of Umayya, the son of Khalaf. Umayya would stop giving him food for several days. When his hunger would increase, instead of being given food, he would be thrown on burning hills and a rock would be put on his chest. At that time he would be demanded to renounce Muhammad's religion and return to the old religion of *Lat* and *Uzza*.

Bilal would bear these tortures with élan. He would remain chanting, *Ahad, Ahad* (The One, The One).

Whenever the pain would become unbearable, he would start chanting these words. And it seemed as if it reduced his pain. Whenever the Prophet passed from him, he would feel very sorry for his condition. He would assure Bilal, "Don't lose hope, the God would relieve you soon".

Whenever Warqa, the son of Naufal passed from there, he would say to his tormentors, "By God, if you kill him in this manner I would turn his grave into a mausoleum. Bilal faced torture without complaining. Once being moved by his worsening condition, Abu Bakr went to Umayya and said, "O cruel, don't you fear God in the least? Why are you killing him uselessly?"

You are responsible for his condition. You only can save him" Umayya told him.

Abu Bakr, "I have a pagan slave. You take that slave and give Bilal to me. Umayya agreed to his proposal and so Bilal was finally saved from this daily bout of torture.

Abu Bakr handed over a slave to Umayya and freed Bilal after taking him in return.

It was not Bilal alone who benefited from this unseen magnanimity of Abu Bakr. He had purchased and freed a number of slaves who had converted to Islam and were being tortured in return by their masters. Abu Bakr would be moved by their pitiable condition and would purchase them and set them free. Once his father who had been seeing his son doing it said, "My son, why do you free weak slaves? Why don't you free those who are powerful and could help you when you are in need."

Father: I aim nothing out of that. I only want the happiness of God. I don't need any service from them in return" Abu Bakr replied.

The Almighty God was immensely pleased by this reply of him. A verse was revealed:

"And none hath with him any favour for reward, except as seeking (to fulfill) the purpose of his Lord Most High".

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Abu Jahl's animosity for Muhammad and Islam had not come down even a bit. He would do everything to harass Muhammad without leaving any occasion to do so.

It was the sixth year of the Prophet-hood. Once Muhammad passed from him, he started calling him names. He used worst of abusive words for him. Muhammad as usual didn't reply. He did give no heed to him. It angered him even more. He became so furious that he took stones from earth and threw them at Muhammad's face. He remained calling him names for a long time.

A bondmaid saw this whole incident. She was the slave of Abdullah Taymi. Abdullah Taymi was a cousin of Abu Bakr and was among the noted leaders of Quraish. He was wealthiest among Quraish nobles and was in the forefront in opposing Muhammad. Abdullah used to earn his money by using his bondmaids as prostitutes.

He was one of the worst enemies of Muhammad. The bondmaid who saw Muhammad had heard as to what Muhammad preached and she was very impressed by his teachings. She had highest regards for him. It was another thing that she had never made it known to others. She was extremely pained by what Abu Jahl had done to Muhammad.

In the evening she heard a known footsteps. These steps were coming from Abu Qais hills. When she saw as to who was coming she realized that it was a well built man whose face was full of grandeur and dignity. A sword was flinging from his side and bow was in his shoulders. She recognized that it was legendry Hamzah, the son of Abdul Muttalib and an uncle of Muhammad. He by one relation was also his cousin and his brother in milk. He was apparently returning after hunting. It was his practice that while returning from hunting he would first go to Kaba and circumambulate around Kaba. Leading leaders of Quraish would be present there at that time. He would sit with them for a while and return home after that. The bondmaid could bear no longer. When Hamzah

neared she said, "O Abu Ammara (Hamzah's title) where all your sense of dignity has gone? How daringly the goons of Bani Makhzoom are torturing Muhammad and you are seeing without doing anything?"ss

"What are you saying" Hamzah who was walking very fast stopped there and enquired?

I will tell you as to what happened to your nephew today. Muhammad was here when Abu Jahl came. He used so abusive words that cannot be repeated. And if that was not enough he also threw stones at Muhammad in anger" said the bondmaid.

"Did it all happen before your eyes" Hamzah who could not believe it wanted to be sure?

"Yes. It all happened before my eyes. I heard all those abuses" she insisted.

Hamzah went red in his face. He strode fast to Kaba and did not talk to anyone. He even did not greet anyone as he used to do. He saw Abu Jahl as soon as he entered there. He was sitting encircled by a group of people. Hamzah furiously reached at him and threw his bow so furiously that Abu Jahl was seriously injured. Blood started streaming from his head.

"Have you taken my nephew as helpless? He is my nephew. And he is not born to listen to your abuses" Hamza was very furious. He was roaring like a lion. Hamzah was very brave and influential due to his power. Nobody could speak openly when he got furious.

But Abu Jahl tried to use the opportunity to turn the tables on him. "Hamzah, be patient. Don't be carried away by emotions. Have you seen as to what your nephew does? Has he taken us as fools that he says anything that comes to his mind? He questions our wisdom and wisdom of our forefathers. And if that was not enough, he denounces our gods and our idols. He misguides our slaves too," he said.

"You are greatest of fools that leaving the God aside you worship lifeless idols. Listen, I am with my nephew. I would live with Islam and die for it" Hamzah replied

Abu Jahl belonged to Makhzoom clan. There were several other

people of his clan present on the occasion. They came for his help and said, "Have you lost your wisdom? Have you renounced your religion and have been impressed by Muhammad's religion?"

"When the truth has been opened upon me, do you expect me to sit idol without doing anything? Listen, I have accepted Muhammad as the messenger of God. Whatever he says is absolutely right. By God I cannot return to the old religion. You are free to do anything if it is in your powers", Hamzah said resolutely.

Abu Jahl was scared seeing Hamzah in this mood. He understood that its result is not going to be good. He pacified his supporters saying, "Really I had done wrong with Muhammad. It is the reaction of that. Don't try to increase the anger of Hamzah. When he becomes cool everything will be alright", he said.

Hamzah announced in the full gaze of people that he had accepted Islam and said that from today I follow the religion of Muhammad.

He returned to his house after making this brave and bold announcement. But a thought was perplexing him. "Did what I say there was true? Have I made wrong announcement? Was I carried away by emotions? All these questions haunted Hamzah?

Sleep eluded him the whole night. He prayed the whole night to be guided to the way that was true and right.

When it dawned it looked as if the doors of his heart had been opened wide. Now his heart was satisfied as to what he had said last evening was true and indeed he was on the right path. He hurried to his nephew and gave him the good news that he too was a part of his flock. He also assured that he was prepared to give up his life for Islam and Muhammad.

Hamzah's acceptance rattled the leadership of Quraish. A great fighter of pagans was now a part of the enemy camp.

No one was happier than the Prophet at the news of Hamzah's acceptance of Islam. People saw that his face glowed and became radiant. He prayed for Hamzah saying, "O God, please keep Hamzah steadfast in his resolve."

Hamzah was a known wrestler of Quraish and one of the

bravest among them. He was known for his bravery and there was none who could challenge him. His acceptance of Islam was the true beginning of the rise of Islam. Muhammad also prayed at that time, "O God, please help Islam by one whom do you like more either Umar or Amr."

Umar was the son of Khattab and Amr was the son of Hisham. Amr later became known as Abu Jahl (father of folly). Both of these men were among the most influential people of Quraish. Muhammad believed that Islam would become powerful if any of the two accepted Islam.

The number of Muslims was on the rise gradually. It had made the leaders of Quraish restless. Hamzah's acceptance of Islam was a tragic news for them. It had challenged their dignity and leadership. Whoever came to know of his decision was terrified that Muhammad is becoming powerful. It was the talking point in every nook and corner. They were both enraged and depressed over the news.

Once when the leaders of Quraish had assembled and were discussing local issues, Muhammad's name like always cropped. Everyone said that nothing was proving effective in tackling Muhammad. At that time Utba, the son of Rabia who was an influential leader of the tribe said, " Brothers, should I go to Muhammad and talk to him? Should I keep a few proposals before him? It is possible that he accepts anyone of them and we are saved from this menace.

All the people there gave their consent. "Why not. You should surely go to him" they said in unison. Utba consequently came to Prophet Muhammad and said, "Nephew, you know as to how noble family you do belong. You also know the high place that you enjoy among us. But what you have been doing over the last few years has affected the whole society. Now see I would put some thing before you, it is possible that any of those points may impress your mind and you become aware of your wrongdoings.

"Please say those things. I will listen to them happily", Muhammad replied.

"My nephew; what is the use of fragmenting the tribe and community? If you want wealth we can provide any amount of wealth for you. If you want leadership we are prepared to make you our leader. If you are eager to don the cap of a king, we are even prepared for that. We would not do anything without your order and consent. And if you have been affected by jinns we are prepared to arrange cure for you. We will arrange best cure and bring best doctors for you" Utba said all those things that several people had talked about earlier.

When Utba completed what he wanted to say, Muhammad said, O Abul Walid (his title) now I will tell something. Please listen to me. Then Muhammad read out the surah Hameem Als Sajdah. Utba listened attentively, without interrupting anywhere. At a few points his face showed as to how terrified he was. When Muhammad completed the surah, he came straight to the leaders of Quraish whom he had left there. But now Utba was a different man altogether. His friends who were waiting for him said after seeing his face, By God it is not the face that had left us a little while ago. When he neared, they asked, "O Abul Walid, what happened? Have you brought some good news?"

"By God, I have listened the poetry of hundreds of poets. I have also heard the predictions of several astrologists but what Muhammad says is an altogether different thing. I never heard anything of that sort.

Brothers; please accept what I say. Let Muhammad do what he is doing. Leave him to be tackled by Arabs. If he is defeated, you get what you wanted to do but you will be saved from killing your own brother. And if they are defeated, then the honour will be yours too and his power will be your power".

"Abul Walid, how you too have been impressed by his magic words?, they asked.

"I said what I saw. Now the ball is in your hand" Utba said.

Quraish would mock anyone whom they listened reading

Qur'an. They would laugh at him and torture him. if they found anyone offering namaz they would try to interrupt his prayers. It was to their blind hate for the religion, otherwise they themselves were very keen to know as to what Muhammad preached. They also loved listening the verses of Qur'an.

So it was nothing amazing that Muslims would try to avoid them and offer prayers where they were sure they are not going to be interrupted. They would recite Qur'an in low voice if they wanted to learn it. Once one of them said, "We recite Qur'an in very low voice. Leaders of Quraish have not even heard clearly as to what we recite. How could they become aware of the beauty of Qur'anic words and its soul? Is there anyone among us who could dare go there and recite Qur'an before them?"

Abdullah, the son of Masood was such a courageous man that he became ready at the first hint. He was one of the first entrants in Islam. He immediately said, "it doesn't need any sort of courage. I am going and will recite Qur'an before them."

"Abdullah you may be in danger. It should be someone who belongs to a powerful clan so that when Quraish try to attack him his people could gather courage to save him" others opined.

"I have nothing to fear. Allah will save me," Abdullah said with great courage.

He stood up and hurried towards Kaba where a number of leaders were sitting. At the Muqam-e-Ibrahim (place of Abraham) he started reciting surah Ar Rahman. People listened to him intently till somebody informed them that these were the same verses that are taught by Muhammad. "Why are you listening to him? Why don't you stop him?" someone said.

Now they all attacked Abdullah. They were kicking him with their hands and feet, but Abdullah did not give up reciting the verses. He was still reciting Quranic verses aloud. When he completed the surah and returned to his friends, the blood was streaming out of his body.

"O son of Masood, it was what we were fearful for" his friends said.

"By God I never found the enemies of Islam more weak. I can recite Qur'an before them even tomorrow" he said courageously.

"Now you have done the job. You have recited Qur'an before them and have fulfilled your obligation" his friends said aloud.

Qur'an that Quraish despised so bitterly also attracted them immensely. They would listen to it surreptitiously. Everybody was interested in listening as to what Muhammad said was revealed by God and people said that it was better than any poetry and better than any magic.

When it was night and Mecca used to become quite, the leading leaders of Quraish would come to Muhammad's house surreptitiously. They would sit quietly. In the night when it was quite Muhammad used to offer prayers before God. He would recite Qur'an in his attractive and impressive voice. He would repeat verses. And those people who vowed to eliminate him during the day would listen to him intently. And when the dawn approached they would return to their houses. It used to happen in the dark of the night. Muhammad himself was unaware of all these.

Once Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan and Akhnas, three leading figures of Mecca started out from their homes separately assuming that they were alone. It was dark everywhere. These three came quietly and sat near his house surreptitiously.

When they reached his house, Muhammad was reciting the verses of Holy Qur'an. It sounded very pleasant. Everyone assuming that he was alone sat there. They all at the end of the night started returning to their houses. On their way they accidentally bumped into each other. Everybody knew as to for what they had come there. The three repented saying, "We will lose the battle if anyone sees us here. Then the field would become open for Muhammad".

When the next night came, Abu Jahl again came there and sat assuming that no other would come due to last night's incident.

Abu Sufyan too reached there after a little while. He too had the same thought in mind. He was followed by Akhnas who also assumed the same thing and thought that the two others would not come tonight. While returning in the morning they again bumped

into each other accidentally. They were repentant for their mistake and promised that they would not come there again.

The same scene was replayed again the next night. Abu Jahl assuming that the two would not come after that came again. Everyone had similar thought in mind and they all again met while returning. Tonight they vowed that they would not come again what may come.

When it was morning, Akhnas went to Abu Sufyan and said, "O father of Hanzala, you have heard as to what Muhammad says. What is your opinion about it?"

"By God, some portion of his message is comprehensible for us, that we can think. But some part of the message is beyond our comprehension. We cannot think so high" Abu Sufyan replied sincerely."

"By God I too have the same thought."Then he came to Abu Jahl and asked him the same.Abu Jahl said, "Abu Akhnas so far we and Abde-Manaf were equal in every thing. We always equaled them in every good work. We were also opponents in all things and used to compete in every field. Now they say that God has sent a messenger to them. Muhammad has been appointed a prophet by God and he gets revelation from Him. Now tell us how come we compete with them in this respect? By God we will neither accept his message nor him as prophet. We will not accept any of his teachings."

Such was his blind animosity against Islam.

They knew that Muhammad was true and his message was nothing but truth. They also believed that he was a Prophet of God and revelations were truly from God. But their animosity had blinded them from accepting the truth. And Satan was there to incite them.

They wanted that the message that comes to Muhammad should also come to them and that they may not be left behind the sons of Muttalib in this noble act.

Walid bin Mughaira would shamelessly say, "How come revelation can come to Muhammad while I am alive? I am the leader of Quraish and everyone gives me honour. Was the head of Thaqif tribe not thought to be fit to be a prophet?" he would question.

There was a leader named Nazar. He was the son of Harith. He had vowed that he will never leave the animosity of Islam and would always oppose Muhammad and his message. He had decided that he would incite people against him and would never allow any mercy to deter him. He had been to Hairah, a city in Yemen. He had heard the tales of the kings of Persia and had heard about some god-fearing people. He would go everywhere where Muhammad would go. Whenever he saw that Muhammad was giving his message and calling people toward Allah he would stand and call the people, "Brothers I can tell you even more interesting tales. Listen." Then he would tell the tales of Persian kings and talk of religions that were in practice and those that never existed. Then he would ask people, "How Muhammad's story can be better than my tales? Doesn't he tell the old stories like me?" That confused people. These tactics of Nazr were in full swing. During those days one of his friends advised him to go to Medina with Uqba, the son of Abu Mueet and meet Jew scholars there. They advised him to tell the whole story of Muhammad and ask as to what they think about him and his claims. They are the People of the Book and have knowledge brought to them by prophets in old ages. They can tell better.

Consequently Nazr and Uqba went to Medina and met Jew scholars there and told them about the purpose of the journey. After listening to their story the scholars said, "there were some young men in the earlier times. Their story is very strange. Ask Muhammad about them and see as to what he tells about them. There was another man who had visited the whole world. Ask Muhammad as to whether he knows anything about him? Ask him about Qur'an and where from it is revealed upon him. If he is able to tell you about these three things correctly then he is a true Prophet, otherwise he is a liar and you are free to do anything you please."

Both of these people subsequently returned to Mecca and repeated the whole thing before the leaders of Quraish. Then some people came to Muhammad and asked him the three ques-

tions. Muhammad waited for the revelation to come. Almighty God informed him everything about the three questions. He was told the story of the young people whose whole story is told in the surah Al-Kahf. He was also told about the young man who conquered the whole world. The story about him was told in great details and was said that he was Zul Qarnain. All incidents with him too were described in great detail. About the third question he was told to tell the people who sought the answer that,

"Surah Isra" 85

The Prophet came striding fast on he feet to the people of Mecca and gave them the answers of the three questions. He had hoped that after getting the satisfactory answers of the three questions they may repent and accept the religion of God. But they were not the sort of people who would repent. Their hearts had been blackened. The answers didn't soften their hearts. Instead they became adamant. Nazar told the people, "Brothers I can tell you the same thing as Muhammad says." Someone else said that we should not listen to Qur'an. It is useless. Take a dig at it as much as you can. It may be possible that such tactics may control Muhammad."

Abu Jahl participating in their diatribe said, "Do you fear what Muhammad says? He says that there will be 19 superintendents in hell and they will not allow the people to flee the hell. Would even 100 of us not suffice for one them?"

They had become so much adamant that any fear of God had vanished from their minds. They themselves believed that even a single angel can destroy the whole of the world.

"We hve appointed only angels to be wardens of the fire, and their number have we made to be a stumbling block for those who disbelieve."

(Surah LXXIV, 31)

Black clouds

Hijrah (migration) is the name of leaving one's home and hearth for the sake of Allah. When the Arabia became totally hostile towards Muslims, and it became impossible to live there for them, the Prophet told his companions , " the land of God is very wide. Try to find another place for you. It may be possible that you could be saved from these oppressors and live in a peaceful ambiance".

'Tell us the Prophet of God as to where we should migrate?' the companions asked.

"Go to Ethiopia. King there is famous for his justice and does not allow anyone to torment anyone there. People too are peace loving in Ethiopia" the Prophet said.

Ethiopia was an important country of African continent at that time and was known as Habshah in Arabia. It was also quite proximate to Arab and is divided by Red See only. The king of Ethiopia was called Najjashi at that time. Najjashi was Christian by religion and his name was Asmaha.

It was *Rajab*, the seventh month of Islamic lunar calendar and the fifth year of Prophethood. When the Prophet gave indication that Muslims could migrate to Ethiopia, a number of Muslims headed towards there. They went there in groups of two, three and four. When they reached there, Najjashi welcomed them with open arms and gave them great respect.

When the news reached the leaders of Quraish that some Muslims had reached to safety from their oppressive hands, they felt let down. The news disturbed them no bound.

Why they were so disturbed by this news? Those people had migrated from their houses after leaving behind their homes and

relatives, giving up everything that they had earned during their whole lives. Quraish should have felt peaceful after their migration. But the reaction was in stark contrast.

To be true, the Quraish feared that the Muslims to whom they had tortured and oppressed so far could emerge powerful after their migration and could receive assistance from outside. This thought horrified them. They thought that this outside assistance would increase the influence of Muslims and reduce their influence on other Arabian tribes. They feared that at that time Islam would become a dominant religion and the religion of theirs and their forefathers would be wiped out and forgotten.

So they immediately sent two messengers to the king of Ethiopia. One was Abdullah, the son of Abu Rabia and the other one was Amr, the son of Aas. The duo was sent to create misunderstanding about Muslims in the mind of Ethiopian elites and the king and so they could get Muslims extradited from there. To influence the king they also sent expensive gifts not only for him but also his nobles.

In fact they first met the Christian priests of his court and tried to influence them by giving them expensive bribes. Later both of them approached the king and met him showing great respect for him. They said, "O great king! Some of our criminal elements have escaped from our place and have taken refuge in the kingdom of your highness. They have also revolted against our religion. They have even not accepted your religion and instead created a new one. Neither we are aware of this religion nor you or your priests. Their relatives and family members are fed up of them and they have sent us to get them back. They know them and are fully aware of their heinous plans."

The priests who were bribed by the duo too spoke in their favour saying, Yes "O king. Some of their criminal elements have really taken shelter in our country. They should certainly be handed over to these two gentlemen."

But the king was still reluctant. He said "the people who have sought refuge in our kingdom and have preferred to live with us

cannot be deported without listening their side of the story. We will give them an opportunity to put their case before us. Where are they? I would like to listen to them. They should be brought in my presence from wherever they are".

It was the most terrific thought for the two messengers.

Muslim migrants were brought to the king in his court. The King asked, "we have heard that you have abandoned your religion. You have not accepted even my religion. I have heard that you speak against other religions that are practiced today. Have you invented a new religion? If it is true what is that all about?"

Abu Talib's son Jafar, the brother of Ali who had also accepted Islam at an early age was there. He represented all the Muslims in a historic speech that would be remembered for ages to come. He said, "O King, we were illiterate. We worshipped idols and ate dead animals. We were involved in adultery. We would torment our neighbours and would fight among ourselves. The powerful among us would try to oppress the weak among us. But God sent His mercy upon us. He sent a Prophet to us. And revealed His book on His Prophet. We knew the Prophet's family very well. We were also aware of his honesty and nobility. He called us towards the religion saying that 'we should worship none but God. We should stop worshipping lifeless idols. Speak truth. Be merciful with people. Keep the welfare of neighbors in mind. Abstain from oppression. Give up adultery. Don't eat money of orphans and never falsely accuse good women. Offer prayers before God and give alms." We accepted him as the true messenger of God and accepted the message brought by him. We also accepted everything that he said.

It is the only crime committed by us that has made our leaders furious. They have tortured us very badly so that we abandon this religion and return to those paths that don't lead towards anything but darkness and wrongdoings. When they crossed every limit of torture and oppression and it became impossible to live there honourably we took shelter in your country so that we could get peace here. We hoped that your country would end our misery."

"I would like to listen to the message that has been revealed

upon him. If you have anything then please allow me to listen"Najjashi said.

Jafar recited the verses of Surah Maryam in the court. Najjashi was greatly impressed by the contents of the verses. Tears started flowing from his eyes. He wept so much that his whole beard became wet. All the priests too were immensely impressed by it. They too wept inconsolably. After listening the surah, the king said, "By God, this message and the message brought by Christ look like two streams started from the same spring". He told the messengers of Quraish, "Go back. By God I would never send these people back with you".

Muslims were greatly impressed by the great benevolence and magnanimity of the king. He had saved them from bitter enemies. The King also returned the expensive gifts brought by the emissaries saying, "Even if you give me gold as large as a mountain I would not hand over these people to you."

The messengers tried their best to influence the King through his courtesans but he was unmindful of any pressure. Muslims lived for a long time in Ethiopia peacefully without any fear.

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Muslims are getting more and more powerful by every passing day, this thought always tormented the leaders of Quraish.

Once they sat together to ponder over the issue. Walid, the son of Mugahira headed the meeting. He was a very aged man and was favoured for the whole tribe for his wisdom and intellect. The issue was obviously Muhammad. Walid said, "Days of Hajj are approaching very fast. Caravans from all of the Arabia would come. Muhammad had become a talking point in the whole of Arabia. They would try to inquire about him to know more about him and his message. You come to a single answer of their enquiries and all of you would say the same thing. If your words contradicted, the people would think that you are lying and then understand your whole game plan."

"Tell us what we should tell them. We will then tell nothing but

that as per your instructions" people assembled there said.

"First you tell me what you think about him" asked Walid.

"We will tell that he is a soothsayer " replied they.

"By God he is not what you say. We have seen a number of soothsayers and have heard their stories. But their speeches are of different kind".

"Should we tell that he is mad," asked the people?

"No, that too will not work. We have not seen anything that could indicate that he is mad", said the old man.

"Then we will tell them that he is a poet," they said.

"No he is not a poet either. We have seen innumerable poets and are aware of all sorts of poetries, said the octogenarian who had seen the whole world.

"Then we will say that he is a magician", the people of Quraish said.

"No he is not magician either. We have seen several types of magicians and their actions," he again said.

Quraish were amazed by what he said. They then asked as to what should they tell in response.

By God, his words are impressive beyond words. Those are trees with deep roots inside earth, whose branches are laden with fruits. If you tell anything of sort as you have said, your all efforts will go in vain. They will understand that this is false propaganda and nothing else.

The best thing to suit us is that he is a magician. And through his magic he creates rift and distance between father and son, sister and brother, husband and wife and among whole families."

These words from Walid's mouth pleased everyone present at that time. They appreciated his words and gave their consent. It was decided that when the Hajjis would come for pilgrimage they would propagate in this manner as advised by Walid.

The season of Hajj came and so came hajjis. These people always remain in search of any occasion when they should try to frighten those people from Muhammad and his companions. They would tell anybody and everybody who was not even interested to

know anything about Muhammad that he was magician.

When the hajj caravans returned home they also brought the news that there was someone called Muhammad and told their people as to what they were told by pagans. This prompted many of the people to know more about Muhammad and what he taught. They traveled long distances to see Muhammad.

The pagans had conspired against Muhammad and had tried to defame him in every possible way. But their conspiracy had turned against them. They had tried to destroy Islam and its image, but instead their own image was affected.

Now Muhammad's fame reached every nook and corner of Arabia. The consequence of this fame would be long lasting and the pagans had this to fear. Though they used to claim that they are doing everything to save their religion and the religion of their forefathers, the reality was different. They were doing all of it not for their religion but the world and its attractions were their main concern.

Arabs used to spend a life free from any principle or restriction. There was no law or constitution or any rule governing their lives. They would do as they pleased. The immorality had touched nadir. Gambling and drinking were their most common pastimes. And there was no fear of the consequences of what they were doing. Muhammad's message was a strict call against these common evils.

It was not the only thing. Mecca was also the centre of idols. People from all places would come to see them. Quraish were the caretakers of these temples. So they get all the offerings presented to the idols. There were other tactics applied by them to seek more and more money from the devotees. Islam's spread was obviously an alarm for them. So they could not remain mere spectators.

There were some Muslims who were still slaves of some pagans. These heartless people would not leave any stone unturned to terrorize them so much that they abandon the religion of God. It was very hard for Muslims to remain mere spectators despite these oppressive tactics employed by pagans. The better off among

Muslims would often purchase such Muslim slaves from their pagan masters and free them.

The pagans saw that Muslims' strength is increasing despite all their oppressive tactics, so they stopped selling Muslim slaves. They wanted to give a lesson to these slaves and all the Muslims.

Those Muslims who had stayed behind with the Prophet and had not migrated to Ethiopia were given worst treatment. Don't talk of common people they even increased their pressure on Muhammad, though Abu Talib was still stoutly behind him. All his family members too were in his favour.

The Prophet had prayed that "God, Please Guide Umar the son of Khattab or Amr the son Hisham to the right path. Please create the love of God in the heart of one who is better of the two". The Prophet had thought, and rightly so that their embracing Islam would reduce their torture and oppression to a considerable extent.

It was prime youth of Umar. He was bravest of young men of Quraish and fear did not touch him. He would do anything if he had decided to do without thinking of its consequences. He was also in the forefront of those who were known for their extreme anti-Islamic leanings. He was epitome of heartlessness and cruelty when it came to dealing with Muslims. When any slave or bond girl embraced Islam he would do everything to down his sprit.

But despite all this extreme cruelty he also had a heart full of compassion and love. He was extremely careful of his relatives' well being. When he came to know that several Muslims have migrated to Ethiopia due to the hardship they had meted out to them, he felt pain inside his heart. But when he heard that Najjashi has refused to deport them and has sent the two messengers empty handed he became furious. He thought, "Muhammad is the only contentious issue. He has created rift among the people of Quraish and he has created gulf between relatives and families. Today I should do away with him".

He took the sword in his hands and vowed to eliminate Muhammad today itself so people could be saved from this daily bitterness.

While on the way he met a man who belonged to the Adi clan. He was Nuaim the son of Abdullah and had embraced Islam a long time ago but had kept it a secret. He had seen as to how inhumanly the pagans treated Muslims so he was not openly announcing that he too has accepted Islam. When he saw that Umar was very furious and was carrying his sword, he asked, "O the son of Khattab, where you intend to go?"

I am going to the same person who is trying to belittle our idols and gods and breaking the whole system of our tribe". Nuaim knew the mind of Umar so he felt that the Prophet's life was in danger. He tried to distract his attention from the Prophet, so he immediately came to a point and said, "Umar you are greatly mistaken. Do you think that Banu Abd-e-Manaf would leave you intact? And first turn your attention towards your own family."

"What? Who in my house" asked Umar?

"Your sister and brother in law both have embraced Islam. You should take care of them first," Nuaim said.

Umar was shocked. He felt fire burning inside his body. He was shocked by the thought that his sister and brother in law have embraced Islam and he was unaware of all that. Both had accepted Islam in the very beginning but had tried to hide the news from people including Umar.

Umar immediately turned to the house of his sister. He was fuming with rage. When he reached the house of his sister he heard the sound of something being read inside the house. He started knocking the door furiously. They were terrified and asked as to who was there.

"I am Umar. Open the doors immediately" he said. People were terrified with Umar's name. They started trying to search a place to hide themselves from Umar. Umar's sister was Fatima and brother in law was Saeed. Both of them used to learn Qur'an from Khabbab. Khabbab was appointed by the Prophet to teach them

the holy Qur'an. He would read for them the newly revealed verses and both will memorize them by heart. At the time when Umar came there, Khabbab was reciting surah *Tahaa.* He hid himself inside. Fatima hid the copy from which he was reading behind her. Gathering his courage her husband came forward and opened the gate. But Umar could not find anyone else except his sister and brother in law.

What sort of sound it was? From where it was coming, he asked them.

They could not gather courage to speak truth at that time so said, "There is nothing, none".

Umar roared, don't hide anything. Do you believe that I am unaware of your embracing Islam.

He approached his brother in law and started kicking him. Fatima could not bear it so she went to rescue her husband. He was so blind in anger that he did not see as to how furiously he was beating his sister? The blood started streaming out of her skull. This torture instead of reducing their commitment for Islam increased their commitment. Fatima and her husband both said together to Umar . We have accepted Islam. You can do what you want to do. Now no power of the world can change our decision. We are Muslims now. We are prepared to bear anything unmindful of what comes our way. You are free to do as you please."

These words that had come from deep inside their heart had a magic effect. Umar who had behaved as if he had a stone instead of the heart in his chest changed totally after listening to these determined words from his sister who was now very injured and blood was streaming from several parts of her body. Now Umar was a changed man different from what he was so far. When he saw the blood of his sister flowing due to his own actions he felt ashamed. He bowed his head in shame and it was the time when he saw the copy of the Qur'an from which Khabbab was reading to them.

"Is it the same book from which you were reciting? Would you give it to me" Umar asked politely.

"I fear that you wouldn't give it back to us" said his sister.

"Be assured that I will return it to you" he assured his sister.

Fatima. Umar's sister gave the copy to him. She had a faint hope that it could change him and guide him towards Islam.

Umar took the copy in his hands, when he went through some verses, it shook his body and he felt the greatness of the book. He said, "How great are these verses".

Khabbab who was hiding nearby immediately came out from his hiding when he heard these words coming from Umar's mouth saying, The Prophet of God had prayed that, "God, please help Islam through Abul Hakm the son of Hisham or through Umar, the son of Khabbab."

"By God, I hope that the God has heard your prayers," said a determined Umar.

"Associate yourself with Allah and don't leave him" said Khabbab.

"Tell me Khabbab as to where I could find Muhammad? I would go to him and embrace Islam. I have found the light and the truth has been opened upon me. I was in great ignorance. Now I am convinced that Muhammad is indeed His Prophet and the message he has brought is indeed the message from God" said Umar.

Khabbab feeling immense joy over this happy news said, "the Prophet is in Arqam's house on the hill of Safa".

It was a great moment of rejoicing for Umar's sister Fatima and her husband. Their beloved and fearsome brother had embraced Islam.

When Umar had come here he had intended to eliminate Islam and had thought to kill Muhammad, and when he was returning from there he was a great servant of God and his Prophet. He was hurrying so to reach as early to Muhammad as possible and give him the great news of his embracing Islam.

When he reached the house of Arqam on the hills of Safa and knocked at the door, Bilal asked as to who was there at door? "I am Umar, the son of Khabbab" he replied with humility.

The Prophet, at that time was surrounded by some of his com-

panions including Hamzah, Abu Bakr, Bilal and Ali besides several others. Bilal returned to the Prophet and said, "O Prophet of Allah, it is Umar at the door. I fear that he may create some bad scenes if we open the doors".

"Open the door. There is nothing better if he had come with good intention" the Prophet said. ..."And if he has come with wrong intention, I can take care of him" Hamza added.

Bilal went to open the door. Hamzah was with him to take care of Umar if he attacked him. When the door was opened the two took him in their hands. When the Prophet saw him, he prayed, "O Allah, please remove all the shortcomings from Umar's heart".

Then he ordered both Hamzah and Bilal to leave Umar alone. Both of them immediately released him from their grips. Umar came forward with great respect and presented himself before the Prophet. The Prophet said, "Wouldn't you leave your style till God send some punishment? Tell me what is your intention?"

"I have come to embrace Islam, O Prophet. Now I am a Muslim and a slave of you and God" Umar said humbly.

Muslims who felt immense joy over the news of Umar's embracing Islam shouted Allaho Akbar, (The greatness is for Allah). This had a great effect on the whole environment. This reflected as to how much joy Muslims must have felt over the news. It gave them happiness. Now Umar was with them. When Umar embraced Islam, the Prophet prayed for him saying, "God! Keep him straight on you religion".

Now Umar who was a Muslims sat among the believers and said, "O messenger of Allah! Aren't we on the right and just path?"

"By God who controls my life! You are on the right path."

"Then why do we hide ourselves?"

"We are very small in numbers and our enemies are numerically very strong" the Prophet replied again.

"It is impossible that we worship God surreptitiously. By God who has sent you as his Prophet I would go in the meetings where I used to talk about idols, pagans and the misguided religion, and would tell about my embracing Islam and would invite them

towards the just religion" Umar said with great determination.

Then the believers made two queues. One queue was led by Umar and the other one by Hamzah. These two groups proceeded towards Kaba in a procession and offered prayers there.

It was the first day that Muslims had come out so courageously in the open in the form of a group.

It was great humiliation for pagans. They had never felt as bad as they were feeling today.

Muslims too were very joyful. But Umar's joy was many times more than theirs. He was feeling as if he had got the greatest thing of the world.

Umar went round the city and announced that he had embraced Islam. He also invited all the people to whom he met to accept Islam as the true religion. The prowess and bravery that was being spent in stopping Islam was now being utilized for spreading it fearlessly.

Abu Jahl was his maternal uncle. He went to his house as well. Abu Jahl who was full of animosity for Muhammad and Islam was all love for Umar. When he knocked at the door he came and met him with full of enthusiasm and love.

"He welcomed him with open arms and asked as to how he came?"

"I have come only to inform you that from now onwards I am a Muslim. I have accepted Allah as the Only True God. I have also accepted Muhammad as his Prophet and have accepted everything that he preaches" he said.

It was the worst news Abu Jahl ever expected from him. He kicked at the door furiously and said, "God destroy you. How bad news ye have brought to me at this time of the day?"

Now Quraish who were all praise for Umar till the other day tried to oppose him in every manner possible. But Umar was not someone who could be cowed down or deterred. He would fight pagans if they attacked him and would give them befitting reply in response to their diatribes. He would announce time and again in the very presence of the leadership of Mecca, "Listen I testify that

there is no god but God and Muhammad is the true Prophet of Him. I will kill anyone who tries to wrong me". At that time the Prophet gave him the title of Farooq because God differentiated by him between the truth and falsehood.

It was the sixth year of Islam. Merely three days had passed after embracing of Islam by Hamzah that Umar too embraced it.

Muslims' power was on the rise. People were increasingly being attracted towards Islam. Quraish too were not somebody to sit idly and see the rise of what they despised. They always tried to deter others from being influenced by Islam and put Muslims in the dock. They also wanted to create rift among Muslims and annoy the companions from the Prophet.

Once they sat together to ponder over and reach a workable strategy to create rift among Muslims and annoy his companions from the Prophet.

They sat for a considerably long time and remained pondering over the issue. Finally they reached the conclusion that they should socially and economically boycott Muhammad and that it should be total. Everyone will have to abandon all relations and contacts with Muhammad and his companions. Neither they would meet them, marry their relatives among his people, purchase anything from him, sell it to them nor will have any interaction with him or his people.

Everyone favoured this proposal. They signed a written agreement to conclude this boycott. It detailed all the intricate details of the boycott. This agreement was hung inside the holy Kaba so that everyone respected it. And no one could dare to do anything that could go against it.

A few more influential leaders of Quraish then went to Abu Talib and asked him either to hand over Muhammad to them or face the consequences. They said, "there are only two things that can be done. Either we kill him. It will give you peace too and we will also be peaceful. We would also give you a large cache of

money in his place. It is the best thing if you give your consent. In the otherwise case we will boycott you. We will not do any trade or transaction with you. The only consequence of this boycott will be your destruction. Now what do you say?"

The sons of Muttalib were not even prepared to imagine that they may hand over Muhammad to the cruel enemies of him and they savour his killing. Muhammad was a ray of hope for the clan ,and they loved him immensely. They did not take any notice of how the leaders of Quraish were trying to terrorize them. They openly said, "We can accept anything but we cannot even imagine that we hand over Muhammad to you".

The pagans then said openly, from now onwards we are your enemies and you are ours. "We will boycott you and surround you from all the four sides."

Quraish not only boycotted them but also surrounded them from the four sides to not allow anybody to reach out to them with helping hand. Bani Hashim were also the relatives of Abdul Muttalib so they too were with them. Only Abu Lahab defected to them. He opposed the whole of his clan and came out in the active help of Quraish in opposing Muhammad and his companions. He always felt happy whenever Muhammad and the people who helped him were in problem. He was the same person who had advised Quraish to boycott Muhammad and his supporters.

It was the first month of the Muslim lunar calendar and the seventh year of revelation. Abu Talib with all his family members had taken refuge in a small valley. Now that valley is known as the Valley of Abu Talib. These people were confined in this valley without any external contact. It was like a prison where they were facing a sort of forced confinement. They would be allowed to come out only during those months in which war and fighting was unlawful. During these months no one would attack others, and all sorts of danger would be withheld during those months.

During those months Muhammad would also come out of the confinement and would meet the people who came to Mecca. It was also an occasion of the booming trade in Mecca. The traders

from far off places would come there and they would do business along with the chores of pilgrimage. Muhammad would go to them and would invite them towards Islam. He would say with great love and compassion for them, "My dear brothers, please accept the religion of God. He would be happy with you and shower His mercy upon you. He would reward you for your good actions. But if you remain following the same misguided path and do not accept His religion he would send his punishment upon you."

The people who were in Ethiopia heard that Umar had embraced Islam and now Muslims were openly calling people towards Islam. And that Islam has finally become strong. Muslims' miseries have also ended. They felt extremely happy and returned from Ethiopia.

But when they were about to reach Mecca they came to know that they were deceived and that it was a mere propaganda to confuse them. Instead Muslims are suffering from confinement and are under great distress.

In that small valley Muhammad and his selfless companions spent not one, two or three month. Not even six month but they were confined there for a period of three long years. Problems would come like invading armies, but they faced all those problems with aplomb.

But when the oppression became unbearable, the Prophet allowed his determined companions to migrate. Following his order most of the believers sought refuge in Ethiopia where their co-religionists were already living safely. Now just a handful companions were left with the Prophet.

Those who did not migrate to Ethiopia and were left behind remained under forced confinement for quite a long time. Every minute was torturous. Their courage and determination was unbreakable. It was the only reason as to why they spent days on end without food but did not allow themselves to be carried out by these torturous tactics of the pagans. They faced hunger and starvation but never even thought to give up the religion or compromise with the pagans.

Abu Talib's love was worth seeing. It was an exemplary love. Despite the fact that he had not accepted Islam he was extremely concerned about the well being and security of Muhammad. He would spend night in his tent to take care of him and when he was unable to be with him he would assign any of his sons to guard the Prophet.

It was a horrible experience. The whole world seemed to have changed into a hostile ground. Friends were turned into foes and nothing around to eat or feed the children. It looked as if the death was always there haunting them all over the place. Allah finally came to their rescue and prompted others to extend a helping hand for these people who were in extremely miserable condition. A few people who saw the worsening condition of Muslims felt pain and mercy for them in their hearts. They would come stealthily and bring food and other essentials for them in the dark of the night.

One of those kindhearted people was Hakeem, the son of Hizam. He was a nephew of Khadijah. He would bring food for his aunt, Khadijah. The great lady as she was she would prefer others over her and distribute the food among people there.

Hisham the son of Umar was also a great supporter of Muslims. His support was crucial in the survival of Muslims during those days. He would bring a large number of cloths and considerable amount of food on camels in the dead of night and then distribute them among Muslims and the people of Banu Hashim. He would also bring other essentials too.

Hisham did it for a long time till the leaders of Quraish came to know about it. Now they also tried to terrorize him so he could leave his valuable help to Muslims. Despite all their heinous actions and reprimands Hisham did not stop his practice.

He did another important work too. He went to Zuhair, the son of Abu Umayya. He was the son of Atika and the maternal grandson of Abdul Muttalib and said, "Here you enjoy the life, eat the best food and wear the costliest of cloths, and your maternal uncle and other relatives live in such oppression and misery. How you are able to bear this humiliation? By God! Had they been the

relatives of Abu Jahl and you might had tried to do anything remotely resembling it, he would not have allowed you to do that."

"What can I do alone? Had there been anyone who could come with me I would have broken that godforsaken, so called accord" Zuhair said.

"If somebody else too comes with you?" asked Hisham.

"Who is the one?" Zuhair asked.

"I would be with you in this act" Hisham assured him. Now they were prepared to work for breaking the shameful accord. The two young men then tried to search another person who could also help them in this task. They not only got three men, but extremely influential and brave men. They were Mutim the son of Adi, Abul Bukhtari the son of Hisham and Zamah the son of Aswad.

In the morning Hisham, Mutim, Abul bukhtari and Zamah went to the holy Kaba where several leaders of Quraish were sitting. They too sat there. Zuhair first circumambulated around Kaba, then returned and said, "O people of Mecca, we eat, drink and enjoy the life, and there are Banu Hashim who are struggling to get even a single loaf for them, they can neither sell anything nor buy. Trade is prohibited for them. Is it just? Is it humanity? By God I cannot sit with peace till this accord is broken."

"It is impossible. It cannot happen" Abu Jahl who too was there shouted.

But when the other friends of Zuhair supported him vociferously, he understood that they had come with full planning and that nothing could be done. So he remained quite.

When Mutim went to tear the paper he saw that it had already been eaten by white ants. Only one word had remained intact and that was *Bismikallahumma* (In the name of Allah). Muslims and other Hashmites came out after the news spread. Muhammad too came out of this forced confinement.

It was the tenth year of the Prophet-hood when the Prophet and his companions were released from the confinement.

Though a problem was solved and the forced imprisonment ended, but several other unfortunate things were still to come. It was merely a few months after the suspension of the confinement that Abu Talib fell severely ill. It was either sixth or ninth month after the end of the confinement. His condition became critical and Quraish thought that he is to die very soon. They then decided to once again go to Abu Talib and ask him for resolution of the problem. They thought that if they did anything after his demise the people of Arabia would taunt them saying that they could not dare when he was alive and now when the uncle has died they are terrorizing the nephew.

Abu Talib was on his deathbed completing the remaining time of his life when some leaders of the tribe approached him. They said, "We believe that you are fully aware as to how much respect we give you. We wish that you do justice regarding your nephew. Please tell him not to say anything about our gods and we too will not say anything about his religion."

Abu Talib called Muhammad and presented before him as to what Quraish had suggested. When he completed his sentence, Muhammad said, "I don't want anything from you. But you tell merely a single sentence from your mouth."

"Not one, we are prepared to say any number of sentences if you want. Tell us," they said.

"Please say that there is no god but God" Muhammad requested.

It angered them very much. They did not wait even for a single minute and left the place.

"Why these people got angry and left the place? I believe you did not say anything bad to them Abu Talib said?

When he said this sentence, it gave Muhammad some hope that uncle could embrace Islam. He said, "Uncle, the leaders of Quraish have refused to accept the message of God. But you don't refuse. Please say these sentences and I will be able to say on the Day of Judgment that you had accepted the message of God. Please say that there is no god but God."

"People will taunt me that Abu Talib was fearful of death. Had I not have this fear I would have accepted what you say. But I will have to die on the religion of our forefathers" Abu Talib said.

The Prophet had immense love and respect for his uncle. He wanted his success in both the worlds i.e. in this world and the life Hereafter. His refusal to embrace Islam really pained him. He was greatly affected by this incident. It affected his health badly. When it happened, a revelation came from God,

"Lo! thou (O Muhammad) guidest not whom thou lovest, but Allah guideth who He will. And He is best aware of those who walk aright."

(Surah XXVII, 56)

Abu Talib's death was a great shock for Muhammad. His strongest supporter who had supported not only when he was a young child and had lost his parents and grandfather but also when he grew up and became prophet, was no more. Now he was left alone to face the nefarious plans of the Quraish.

Merely a few days had passed that another big blow came for Muhammad. Some traditions say that merely after three days and some say that after 35 days of Abu Talib's death Muhammad received another shocking news. It was the death of Khadijah. The great lady who had supported him at every moment was no more. The lady who had always loved him, given her affection to him, took care of him, who consoled him when he was in distress, gave happiness when he was in problems had now left him alone. Khadijah was the first to embrace Islam. She was the one for whom the God had Himself sent greetings and had informed that she will have a palace made of priceless stones in the heavens. Abu Talib and Khadijah were like forts protecting Muhammad. And with their death the protection and support was gone.

But now it was impossible to stop this message. It was not restricted to Mecca alone but had spread all over Arabia. It was also decided by Allah that Islam has to spread whether pagans like it or not.

Khadijah died during the holy month of Ramadhan, the ninth

Critical times

The pagans tried their best to force Muhammad that he stop propagating the message of God, but they could not get the least success. It was a great tragedy for them. They were not able to understand as to why they were unable to get any success against Muhammad. They were still searching new and newer ways to stop Muhammad from his endeavor.

Now when Abu Talib, Muhammad's great support was gone, they had ample opportunities to fulfill their heinous agenda.

Abu Talib was a great wall of protection around him. His presence had also ensured the support of the whole clan for Muhammad and his people. It was because of him that his relatives helped him every time.

Now there was no protection. There was no one who could stand for Muhammad as he used to do. There was no question of mercy for him. Everyone was now free to act as they pleased.

It was the extreme torture. While the Prophet was offering prayers near Kaba, an enemy came and threw the intestine and bowel of a dead goat over him. The Prophet did not answer. He even did not curse him. The Prophet only said, "O sons of Manaf how do you behave with your neighbor?"

Once while he was going somewhere that someone threw ash on him. He came to his house in the same condition. When the youngest daughter Fatima saw this scene she ran and brought water to clean him. She started washing his head while tears were rolling down her eyes. The bad treatment meted out to her father was causing immense pain to her little heart. The Prophet was consol-

ing her little daughter saying, 'Don't weep my daughter. God will help your father.'

After Abu Talib's demise, Abu Lahb stopped his torturous actions for a few days, but later the intensity went up. He and his wife, both tried to make the life of the Prophet and his children miserable.

Abu Jahl was always behind him. At times he himself will try to harass him and when he himself was not around he would order goons to do the same with to Prophet. Whenever Muhammad came to either offer prayers or circumambulation, he would torture with his cohorts or plan to eliminate Muhammad. Abu Bakr who used to be very careful about the Prophet would try to protect him saying, "Do you want to kill a person for merely saying that God is his lord. And he has brought open signs from God?"

At times Abu Bakr too would have to face the consequences for interference. They would surround him and start kicking him so he may not gather courage to interrupt again and they could do as they please. But Abu Bakr could never be browbeaten. He was more concerned about the safety of Muhammad than his own. He thought that every kick was well earned for protecting Muhammad. Muhammad would always say, "As long as Abu Talib was alive, Quraish could never transgress in case of me".

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The Prophet is facing the terrible tactics of the pagans. This thought gave great pain to the believers.

But they could do nothing. Merely a handful of Muslims had been left behind in Mecca. Most of them had migrated to Ethiopia. So they could not fight Quraish who overwhelmingly outnumbered them. They could do only one thing, to bear it with utmost patientce.

What happened to Muslim women? They too were not unaffected by it. Once Kholah came in the presence of the Prophet. She was the daughter of Hakeem and wife of Usman Mazoon. "Why don't you marry again? O prophet of Allah, so that some

one could share your sorrows. Not exactly like Khadijah but at least someone to take care of you", she said. "Towards whom are you indicating," asked the Prophet?

"You can get both, either an unmarried girl or a widow," said Khola.

"Who is unmarried and who widow?" the Prophet sought explanation from her.

"Among unmarried, Abu Bakr's daughter has greatest right upon you and among widows it is Saudah, the daughter of Zamah. She has embraced the religion of Allah and has accepted everything from her own consent. Both she and her husband had migrated to Ethiopia but while returning her husband Sakran the son of Amr passed away. If she comes to your house she will feel it as a privilege and you too would feel comfort" Khaula gave all the details.

May God keep you happy! Your advice is good.

Khaulah went to Saudah and said, "how fortunate you are! Saudah who was unaware of all this said, "sister what are you talking about?"

"Be happy, you are very fortunate. I have brought news that would convert your unhappy life into bliss. You are again going to have a family and you will be envied by every woman. I have got the consent of the Prophet for you." Khaula informed her.

The joy reflected from Saudah's face when she heard the news. She asked Saudah to go to her father and give herself the happy news. When Khaulah went there and informed him about the great news, he too felt immense joy over the great joyous news. "How good news have you brought!" he thanked her.

Then Khaulah proceeded to the house of Abu Bakr, and met Umme Rumman, wife of Abu Bakr and mother of Aaisha and told her that the Prophet had given his consent to marry Aaisha.

"How joyous occasion would it be. Let Abu Bakr come here" said Umme Rumman. Within a few minutes he too was there and was as happy as anyone after listening the news. He welcomed the news and thanked God for being graced by it.

And so Khaula arranged his marriage with Saudah and Aaisha. This relation also strengthened his bond with these two families. Saudah immediately came to the house of Prophet after the marriage. At that time she was around 50 years. Aishah was still young so she came to the house of the Prophet after a few year of the marriage.

Pagans' excesses were in full swings. They had vowed that they would harass Muhammad till he stops from calling towards the religion of God. And if he, doesn't stop they were prepared to use swords to silent the voice. Their excesses were not only against him but also against all his companions. They wished that these people returned to the old religion, the religion of their forefathers.

It was the tenth year of prophet-hood and the tenth month of the lunar calendar when Muhammad felt so fed up with these people and their torturous acts of humiliations that he thought of going to Taif. This city was situated some sixty miles from Mecca. Muhammad for whom the excesses of the Quraish had become unbearable thought that people there may be more receptive towards the message of God and it could be helpful in the spread of the truth.

But it was nothing different from Mecca. Probably they were worse than the people of Mecca. Not only they did not accept the belief they also refused to allow him stay in the city.

The leader of Taif too had similar fears from Islam as the leadership of Mecca. Taif is one of the more beautiful places of Hijaz. Surrounded by hills it was famous for its fruits. Nobles from all over the Quraish used to come there to spend summers when the summers became unbearably hot. The famous idol of Arabia, Lat, was also there and so it had also become an important center of pilgrimage. The people in Taif thought that if they provide refuge to the Prophet the whole of Arab would become their enemy and they will lose the prominent place they enjoy now.

Muhammad wished that his journey and the subsequent refusal

remain a secret from Mekkans. He feared that they would taunt him for his failures even more and become more bold in dealing with him and his companions. So while returning back from there, Muhammad asked one of the leaders of a prominent tribe of the city, Thaqif to not let the Mekkans know about the trip.

But they were not prepared for this. And if his was not enough they deployed goons and urchins of the city to give Muhammad a lesson. The rogue elements threw stones at Muhammad injuring him seriously. They threw stone specially targeting his feet. Consequently his shoes would become full of stones. And when seriously injured Muhammad would like to sit for a while to regain power to walk further they would compel him to walk again by not allowing him to sit there and again start throwing stones. This stone throwing was also mixed with verbal abuses. It was a dreadful scene.

The Prophet continued walking till he reached the last portion of the city. There was a big orchard of grapes. Branches were laden with fully ripe grapes. Muhammad entered the garden to get to safety from stone throwers..

He saw towards skies not complaining but with prayers for the mercy and the love of God. Muhammad started calling the Almighty the All Knowing God to revoke his mercy and get strength from Him. Tears were streaming out of his eyes and prayers were on his lips. He was saying,

"O God! I complain to none but thee about my powerlessness and my worthlessness among people.

O King of mercy, You are the Master of downtrodden and depressed. And you are my Master too.

"In whose custody You are sending me? In the custody of an unknown, one who feels angry after seeing me, or in the custody of an enemy who has got hold of me?

My Lord, I don't care for anything if You are not angry with me.

But I like being in Your safety. That is more comfortable for me.

I seek safety from Thee the light of Whose face has enlightened the whole world, removing any sort of darkness from here and Who controls the whole universe. And I seek safety from Thee from being punished by Thee or You become annoyed with me.

I would continue my efforts to please You, till You become happy. And all the powers and efforts are in Your hands."

The orchard in which Muhammad had taken refuge belonged to two brothers Utba and Shebah. They were the sons of Rabiah and had seen from their own eyes as to how much torture the people of Taif had given to Muhammad. They felt pain for him and asked their slave, a Christian to go to him and give him grapes to eat.

Addas, the slave went to him with grapes and presented them before the Prophet. Muhammad started with, "I begin in the name of Allah, the most Merciful".

These words amazed Addas as he had never seen any person in Arabia using these words.

When Muhammad asked him as to who he was and from where he belonged, he said, "My name is Addas and belong to Nainua and I am a Christian." "You are follower of Yunus the son of Mati. He was a great person" commented Muhammad.

It increased his suspense more. "How did you know him"Addas asked? "He was a prophet and I am a Prophet too", Muhammad replied. Addas could not restrain him. He bowed and kissed Prophet's hands and feet.

His masters Utba and Sheba were looking the scene. When he got back to them they asked him as to what was he doing? "My masters there is no better person than him on this whole universe. He has told me a thing that no one could have told except a prophet" Addas answered.

"Don't leave your own religion for him. Your religion is better than his religion" they advised him.

The Prophet had lost hope from Bani Thaqif. He thought that he is not going to get any assistance from there. So now after leaving the city of Taif he started walking towards Mecca, due to

whose people's torture he had tried to seek assistance from other people. But instead of getting any help from them he was chased by them.

In between Taif and Mecca there is a place called Nakhlah. It took one day and one night from Mecca to reach there. When the Prophet got tired, he stopped there to stay for the night. When a considerable time of the night had passed, he started reciting Qur'an in his voice choked with emotion. The impressive sound created an impression on the whole environment in that dead of night. A group of Jinn who were passing through the area overheard the verses of Qur'an being recited there. They wondered at the beauty of the verse and stopped to listen it. By God's help they were impressed by the Holy Qur'an and they embraced Islam. They returned to their people and said, "

"Say (O Muhammad): it is revealed unto me that a company of Jinn gave ears, and they said: Lo! it is a marvelous Qur'an, which guideth unto righteousness, so we believe in it and we ascribe unto our Lord."

(Surah LXXII, 1-2)

Muhammad was reciting Qur'an in his impressive voice and this group of Jinn was listening to it. Muhammad was totally unaware of their presence at that time and that they were very impressed by Qur'an. He remained unaware of the fact that this group embraced Islam and warned their community too. He was totally unaware till the almighty God Himself informed him of the fact.

"And when We inclined towards thee (Muhammad) certain of the Jinn, who wished to hear the Qur'an and, when they were in its presence, said: give ear! And, when it was finished, turn back to their people, warning."

(Surah XLVI, 29)

Quraish knew the whole story about Muhammad's visit to Taif and his failure there. They also came to know that Muhammad was chased by the goons of Taif and stones were thrown at him. They were extremely happy over this treatment meted out to him.

They had vowed to eliminate him if he returns to Mecca. They had thought that the failure if Taif would destroy his spirit and then it would be easy to do what they wished to do for so long.

Quraish were planning his end and Muhammad was totally unaware of their plans. When he started for Mekka from Nakhla and reached a place called Hira, he met a few people who told him as to what the people of Mekka were planning regarding him. Muhammad asked one of them to go to Mekka with his message. When the man showed his willingness Muhammad asked him to go to Akhnas the son of Shuraiq and ask him as to whether he would be able to protect me and allow me to call towards Allah?

That gentleman went to Mekka, met Akhnas and gave Muhammad's message to him.

"We are partners of Quraish. How come I can give shelter to Muhammad in violation of our accord" said Akhnas?

The man returned to Muhammad and apprised him as to what Akhnas told him. Muhammad again requested him to go to another man. When the gentleman showed his willingness Muhammad said, "Go to Suhail the son of Amr and ask him as to whether he could protect Muhammad?"

When he went to Suhail and gave Muhammad's message he said that his clan was in accord with Quraish and so he could not violate the accord.

So he again returned to Muhammad. Muhammad again requested him to bear the trouble and again go to Mutim the son of Adi and give the same request to him. Mutim readily agreed to give shelter to Muhammad and asked Muhammad to come to Mekka without fearing anything.

When it dawned, Mutim got into the battle gear with his sons and nephews and told them to take care of anyone who troubled Muhammad. When they reached Kaba the leaders of Quraish were already there. Abu Jahl too was present there. When he saw them in this aggressive mood, he asked them as to whether they had embraced Islam or merely given shelter to Muhammad?

Mutim told him that they had given shelter to Muhammad.

Abu Jahl, if you have given him the shelter, then we too give him the shelter".

Muhammad entered Mekka and as Mutim had already given his protection to him no one said anything. The Prophet went straight to Kaba and performed circumambulation. The leaders of Quraish were present there at that time. Abu Jahl was one of them. There were some people from Muhammad's clan Bani Hashim as well. When he saw Muhammad he taunted them saying, "O son of Manaf he is your Prophet."

Utba, the son of Rabia too was there. He belonged to Bani Hashim and still followed the paganism said immediately, "Why do you feel jealous if anyone of us gets prophet-hood?"

When Muhammad heard these words he came forward and said, It is amazing Rabia. You did not feel pity and shame for God and His Prophet but when it came to you." Then he told Abu jahl, "Listen the time is approaching very fast when this whole laughter will disappear and you will weep and instead of water blood will flow from your eyes." Then addressing others he said, " Leaders of Quraish listen carefully, the days are not very far off when you would meet a disastrous end".

Despite the fact that these words pained them extremely they could do nothing as Mutim had granted asylum to him.

Now Muhammad diverted his attention to other tribes and clans. He would go to them and present the message of God before them. He went to their villages, their community centers and visited their market places and called them towards God. He invited them to accept the religion of God and help him take the message to other parts so people who were on the wrong path could be guided to the right one.

Among Muhammad's cousin sisters was Hind. She was daughter of Abu Talib and was known as Umme Hani. It was tenth year of prophet-hood and the seventh month of the lunar calendar of Islamic year. Muhammad had stayed in her house that night.

Muhammad woke up sometimes before Fajr. Then he got up. Umme Hani too woke up a little later and offered after midnight prayers. When Muhammad completed his prayer, he saw towards Umme Hani and said, "I had offered night prayers with you. You had seen me. Then I went to Jerusalem and offered prayers in Baitul Maqdis. And now I have again offered the prayers with you."

This amazed her. She had seen that Muhammad had offered Isha (night) prayers with her. How he offered the prayers in Baitul Muqaddas in the midnight and how he was able to offer prayers with now? How it could be possible, thought she?

She came to him and sitting nearby said, "O brother could you tell me this in detail?"

"While I was sleeping I thought that someone was trying to wake me up. When I saw it was Gabriel who had come crossing the roof. It was the first occasion when he had come in this manner. Earlier he used to come from forward. He took my hands and took me to the point of Hateem in Kaba and made me lie on the ground. Then he tore my chest. He had a saucer made of pure gold with him. It was full of wisdom. He poured the contents of the saucer in my chest and then closed it. Then a white animal came that was a little smaller than horse and a bit bigger than ass. We two rode on that. Within minutes we were at Baitul Muqaddas. I offered the prayers there and all the prophets offered prayers behind me.

Umme Hani listened the whole story intently. She was feeling astonished. Then she thought of the greatness of the Prophet. She also realized a danger and said, "My brother, please don't tell about it to anyone else. No one would believe it and the people who have accepted you as prophet they too will go back."

But Muhammad refused to accept her suggestion and said; "No I will tell it to everyone, even to the leaders of Quraish."

"Brother, Please don't tell it to at least Quraish. They will never believe it. They may even harm you" Umme Hani pleaded.

"Why are you so fearful about it. God's help is enough for us.

Then he went to the meeting grounds of the Quraish. Umme Hani who could not succeed in stopping him from that sent a

bondmaid behind him to see as to what happens.

The leaders of Quraish were sitting near Kaba. Muhammad too went to them and thought to tell the whole story to them. But then he thought of consequences of the action and felt confused whether to tell them the whole story or not.

"Will they believe me?" he thought.

"Should I tell them the whole story? Should I also tell them that from there I went to see the world beyond this universe and saw the paradise and hell too or restrict it to as much as I told Umme Hani?" he was still confused.

For a long time Muhammad sat there and remained into a thoughtful mood as to what to do. He was very happy. His face was glowing with the thought that his God has honoured him greatly. First He took him to Jerusalem from Kaba and then to skies. But he was also fearful that when he will tell about it to Quraish they will mock him and will not believe him. I want to share the signs of the greatness and power of God to them, he was thinking.

He was feeling very confused by all these thoughts. He was sitting silent that was not his habit.

Others too saw him in this thoughtful mood. They knew that Muhammad never sat like it. Abu Jahl and Mutim, the son of Adi were also there besides a number of other people. When Abu Jahl saw him in this thoughtful mood he approached him and asked, "What happened to you. Is there anything new?"

Muhammad got the opportunity to say as to what he wanted to say. He said, "I was taken to Baitul Muqaddas he informed him?"

Abu Jahl unable to believe asked him again, "Where did you visit?"

Abu Jahl was on the verge of laughing but he controlled himself. He knew that it can become an important weapon to be used to defame Muhammad and mock him. He thought that it will destroy the credibility of Muhammad not only in the eyes of his opponents but also in the eyes of those people who believed him.

So he asked him as if he was encouraging him, "will you tell

the same thing if I call others too here?"

Muhammad: "Why not? When I can say something to you why I cannot say the same thing before others?

Abu Jahl asked all the people to come there. Within moments all the people there were asking Abu Jahl as to what had happened?

Abu Jahl asked Prophet to tell the story to them.

"Tonight I visited Baitul Muqaddas. When I reached there a team of prophets came there. Abraham, Moses and Christ all were there. Then I led the prayers," Muhammad said it as a mater of fact.

"Oh all the prophets were brought to you alive? Could you describe as to how they looked?" they all asked him while laughing uncontrollably.

"Christ is neither very long nor very short. He has a wide chest and looks as if blood is pouring out of his body. His hair is reddish. Moses is strong and his colour is whitish. He has a long body. And Abraham, by God he resembles me very greatly. Not only in his appearance but in his character as well," Muhammad told them.

People's reactions were different. They were confused as to whether what Muhammad was saying was right or wrong. Some people were immediately impressed. Others' mind refused to respond. Others were bewildered. Some started trying to belittle Muhammad. Some of them apparently to confuse Abu Bakr reached the house of Abu Bakr and give him the news.

"Did you listen what your friend says? He claims that he was taken on the tour of Baitul Muqaddas tonight?" they asked him.

Abu Bakr: Has he said so?"

"Yes. We have just heard it from our these ears" they replied.

"If he says so, then in fact it is true" Abu Bakr responded.

"How come we believe it? Is it possible that someone starts out in the night from here, reaches Jerusalem and then gets back here before dawn" the pagans said.

"Yes. It can be believed. I have believed even more strange things from Muhammad. He says whether it is night or day he gets message from skies and I never doubt it. You are amazed in mere-

ly his trip to Jerusalem. How strange is the thing that he gets revelations from skies within seconds and minutes" he said.

Then Abu Bakr came to the Prophet. Muhammad was in Kaba at that time and the pagans were trying to humiliate him saying, "We had some doubt that you are a liar and say everything after cooking up yourself. It takes at least a month for us to reach Jerusalem and similar amount of time is consumed in getting back from there. And you say that you went there and got back from there with-in a night. By Lat and Uzza, we can never believe that it is true. It is completely false and a big lie".

"Muhammad doesn't speak false. Whatever he is saying is true" Abu Bakr said.

"Could you tell us as to how Baitul Muqaddas looks?" asked Mutim.

Abu Bakr knew that Mutim intended to confuse Muhammad. He thought that Muhammad tells everything so his truth is established.

Keeping these things in mind he said, "O Messenger of God: Please tell about it. I have been to there".

Muhammad started telling everything about Jerusalem and the great mosque of Baitul Muqaddas. He told every important sign of the grand mosque though he had never been there before. Everyone was listening totally amazed. But their perverseness again came in the way. They again said, "It looks as if you learnt these things from someone else. Tell us anything else that could convince us".

Then the Prophet told them about the caravans he had seen and as to when they may reach here. He also told them that what good they are bringing with them and so much and that sorts of animals are with them.

"Let the caravans reach here. Only then we will be able to believe as to what you say. We would also ask them as to where they were on that night and about the signs you have mentioned" the pagans said.

At that time Abu Bakr said, "O Prophet of God. You have said

truth. I fully believe in your words".

Muhammad lowered his head for a while. Then raised it again and said seeing towards Abu Bakr, "Congratulations O Abu Bakr, God has given you the title of Siddiq (truthful).

The people dispersed. But everywhere it was the only talking point. It will be the topic whenever people met.

"Is it right? Can it be reasoned? Is it possible to go there and get back within such a short time? Or Has Muahmmad created a lie?" they would ask one another.

Just days after it the caravans started returning and they had same goods and same livestock as Muhammad had said.

Did the pagans accept Muhammad as the true messenger of God? Did they feel that they were on the wrong path and repented?'

No. It only added to their insistence. They said, "Walid, the son of Mughaira had said that Muhammad is a magician. How right he was!"

It was the condition of pagans. It proved no less important and decisive for Muslims either. It was a turning point for Muslims that differentiated who were true believers and who were not. It further strengthened the belief of those who were strong in their commitment. Others who were still not very strong in their beliefs reverted and left the religion.

Muhammad told the whole story to his companions. He told them that he had gone to skies and had seen the great scenes of the might of the Almighty God. He said that he had visited all the skies. Describing the visit he said, first Gabriel took him to the first sky where he met Adam, the father of all the men and women in the world. He saw that when Adam used to see to his right side he would look happy and when he saw to his left side he would look perturbed and tears would fall from his eyes. The prophet said when he was seeing towards his right side he was seeing the good acts of his virtuous sons and daughters and on his left side he saw the crimes committed by his bad progenies.

He welcomed Muhammad saying, "Welcome O honourable

Prophet and my virtuous son". Gabriel informed him that he was Adam.

Then Gabriel took him to the second sky, then third. Prophets would congratulate him using similar words till they reached on the seventh sky. There he met Abraham who met him with great enthusiasm and welcomed him saying, "Welcome the honored Prophet and my great son".

They proceeded further and saw on their way the great scenes of the greatness of the God. He saw that thousands of angels are praying before God everywhere till they reached near the Arsh-e-Ilahi (throne of the God). Here prayers of fifty times a day were made obligatory for his followers. While returning he met Moses who asked as to what was made obligatory for his people? .

"Fifty times prayer a day" replied the Prophet.

Moses: "Go back and request God to reduce the numbers". Muhammad returned there and requested the God as Moses had asked him. The Almighty God reduced the numbers to half. When Muhammad again met Moses who said after enquiring, "these are still too much. Your followers may not be able to do it. Muhammad again returned and requested God to reduce the numbers. God fulfilled his request and again reduced the numbers. When Moses came to know of this again he said, "these are still too much. Please go again and request the Almighty God to reduce the numbers further."

Muhammad returned to God again. God reduced the number to five and said, "Our decisions don't change. These are five times' prayers. But the compensation for these are that of fifty times' prayers".

The believers sat through the whole night listening as to what the Prophet had seen there. Muhammad also told them as to what he had seen in the Paradise. He also congratulated for these blessings of paradise to his virtuous companions.

What about those who have gone on back foot? About them the God Himself has said:

"And (it was a warning) when wee told thee: Lo! thy Lord

incomasseth mankind, and we appointed the vision which We showed thee as an ordeal for mankind, and (likewise) Accursed Tree in the Qur'an. We warn them, but it increaseth them in naught save gross impiety."

(Surah XVII, 60)

And the team was formed

What should one do while facing the trial and tribulation? How should one behave with enemies? How one should reach out to people and convince them about the message of God? The verse mentioned below answers all these questions.

The Wise God said:

"Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo! he, between whom and thee there was enmity (will become) as though he was a bosom freind."

When the incident of Meraj came, the people who did not had the enlightened heart and were devoid of mind and wisdom were left totally blind of God's mercy. They could not understand as to what Allah aimed from it. They went on back-foot after being misled by Satan. Muslims were weakened by these incidents of desertion. Pagans' hands were strengthened by these actions of desertions.

They almost opened a floodgate of war against the Prophet and his people. They vowed that they would not show the least mercy for either Muhammad or his companions. From these torturous tactics they aimed to weaken Muslims who in return will desert Muhammad.

The Prophet faced their torture without complaining and instead of answering them in kind always behaved in a manner full of mercy. There were three more important markets in Arab, Ukaz, Minjannah and Zil Majaz. The pilgrims who used to come to Kaba would first visit these markets before coming to the holy Kaba. The Prophet would visit these places, meet the people and would

also visit the sites where the caravans of these pilgrims would stay. He would go to every such place, meet them and would extend the message of God to the. He would recite the verses of Qur'an and warn them with dire consequences of wrongdoings and worship of idols. He would also announce before them the rewards Allah has promised for those people who would accept His message. Muhammad also wanted a respite from the daily bout of tortures from the hands of Quraish so that he could concentrate on mission the God has asked him to do.

He would go there regularly and see the people and call them towards the way of God. But how the pagans could bear it? They were not prepared to allow the numbers of believers rise. So whenever the Prophet would go, Abu Lahb or some other goons would follow him and whenever he talked to anyone and called him towards the religion of Almighty God, they would belie his claim and said that he is an imposter.

They would say, "brothers he is a liar and a big magician. He himself has deviated from the right path and wants to misguide others too. Don't listen and accept what he says".

This would create suspicion in the minds of unsuspecting people. They would close their ears in order to not allow his words enter their ears. It must be very few people who willingly listened to Muhammad and his message.

Tufail Dosi was one of the very few and fortunate people who were able to listen the teachings of the Prophet. He belonged to a very rich and influential family of Arabia. When he came for pilgrimage he was told by Meccans to be careful of Muhammad. Tufail believing their words started inserting cotton in his ears in order to not let any such word in his ears. When he reached Kaba he saw Muhammad offering prayers. Some words of Qur'an also came in his ears. When he listened them carefully he loved them. He thought in his heart, "How big fool I am? Can't I distinguish between good and bad? Then what is the meaning of not listening to what he says? If his message is good, alright, otherwise it can be refused."

When Muhammad started for his house he followed him. He told him the whole story. Muhammad read some verses of Qur'an to him. He was greatly impressed by the verses of the Holy Qur'an. He felt that his heart was receptive towards these verses. He also experienced a sort of cool sensation in his heart and peace in his mind. When Muhammad asked him to accept it he showed immense courage in promptly accepting the religion of God. He also told the Prophet, "O Prophet of God! People of my clan love me immensely. They are prepared to lose their lives for me. They take them as fortunate whenever I ask them to do anything. I will go and invite them too to accept Islam".

When he returned to his clan and asked his family members to accept Islam, they showed their willingness to follow him. They had total faith in his wisdom so they accepted his invitation and embraced Islam. Later the whole tribe converted to Islam.

Now Muhammad had become a talking point not just in and around Makkah but all over the Arab. When Christian clergymen heard about him they sent a delegation to see him and find out as to what his message was. When these people came, met the Prophet and Muhammad recited a few verses from Qur'an they too promptly accepted that it was indeed the religion of Almighty God. They accepted his teachings. While they were returning, Abu Jahl and some other people of Quraish bumped into them. When they saw at them and came to know that instead of falsifying Muhammad they had accepted his religion, they got angry and said, "God destroy you. Your community had sent you to find out the truth. Instead you lost your own religion."

One among those who embraced Islam in this manner was Suwaid son of Samit. He was one of the elites of Medina. Besides being a good warrior he was also a prolific poet. The people of his clan used to call him *Kamil* (complete). He came for pilgrimage to Mekka. When Muhammad heard the news of his arrival he approached him and called him towards monotheism. Suwaid said that probably it is the same thing as he has. When the Prophet asked him as to what he had with him, he told him that he had

some fables from Luqman that were full of wisdom. He told those fables to the Prophet. After listening to him intently the Prophet appreciated those fables that were truly full of wisdom and added, I have something even better than these.

Then he recited a few verses from Qur'an to him and asked Suwaid to renounce idol worship and embrace Islam. Suwaid who was extremely impressed by the verses of the Holy Qur'an appreciated it.

Suwaid returned to Median. He would revise the verses recited by the Prophet and would repeatedly ponder over them. When he was killed after some times he died as a Muslim. Suwaid was killed during one of the bloodiest wars being waged by two tribes of Medina Aus and Khizraj. The war that was continuing for more than a decade was inflamed by the divisive tactics of the Jews of Medina.

The people who had gone to Mekka and embraced Islam included one young man Ayas, the son of Maaz. A young man at that time he had gone with some leaders of the Aus tribe to bring Quraish with them against Khizraj. The two tribes were trying to conclude treaties with other Arab tribes in order to strengthen their positions.

When Muhammad came to know of their arrival he went to them and read a few verses of the Holy Qur'an before them. After he had read the verses, Ayas exclaimed saying to his people, "By God it is better than what you have come for".

But at that time they were so obsessed with war and its preparations that they did not think of it. Instead the group leader took some small 'stones and threw at young Ayas saying, shut up. We haven't come here for this now."

Ayas embraced Islam there on the spot. Merely some time had passed that the war again started. It was a bloody war like always.

Muhammad continued his work. He went to almost all the tribes and people from different cities and asked them to strengthen the religion of Allah. He would try to convince them with great wisdom and insight. But it did not produce the desired result.

Everyone turned down his plea.

For some it was due to the fact that they thought that when Muhammad would come, then people from outside would not like to come to their city. For Thaqif tribe of Taif, it was the most important thing. During summer it was one of the more important tourist spots in Arab and well off people from surrounding places would come there to beat the heat. Thaqif also feared that if they accept the teachings of Muhammad they would lose economically as people from other parts of Arabia would abandon visiting their city. The famous idol of Arab, Lat was also installed in their city and they were sure that they will have to destroy it after embracing Islam.

There were other tribes who were obsessed with power. The same was the condition of a tribe Banu Aamir. They presented a proposal before the Prophet saying, "We will accept you as true Prophet of God given the fact that you hand over the governance to us after you".

The Prophet refused the proposal saying, "governance and nobility is for God and He hands over to whom He likes"

They refused to accept Islam saying, "We get killed for the establishment of your religion and when you get the power it goes to other people. We don't need you."

Kandah, Kilab, Banu Hanifah and Banu Mizr were other prominent tribes of the Arab. There were other numerous big and small tribes. They all refused, no tribe was prepared to help him. They would say that, "a man is better known in his own tribesmen. There must be some reason behind Quraish's reluctance to accept your religion".

So everywhere it was only refusal. No one was prepared to help out Muhammad and his people. There were people who treated him badly when he approached them, and when there were people from some tribes who were prepared to listen to him creafully, Abu Lahb would come and incite them against him and said, "He wants that you leave worshipping Lat and Uzza. Beware of him".

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Aus and Khizraj the two important tribes of Medina were fighting a bloody war for a very long time. When Muhammad was appointed Prophet by Almighty God, their enmity was on its crescendo. Now they were also at war with Jews too. So these two tribes would fight among themselves. And when they were not fighting among themselves they must be fighting with Jews. So war was a continuous phenomenon of Medina.

Jews were v..ry clever. When they thought that if the two tribes of Median come together and fight unitedly against them, they would be big losers. They thought that they were not only losing big money in these wars but also men, their most important assets. So far we were the leaders of Medina, but slowly we are losing our importance here. They thought to do something that could create a permanent feud between the two brotherly tribes and they remain at loggerhead with each other forever.

They did as they had planned. So the bloody fight began that could not be extinguished like the jungle fire. Innumerable people were killed and their all money was spent on merely financing this bloody war. The Jews had a heinous policy. They would come to the rescue of the defeated tribe, try to raise their moral and would also extend financial assistance to finance the war. It would always be loan with very high interest rates. But from behind they were trying to dislodge both the tribes from the prominent market places and throw them to margins. They would also try to establish them above the two warring tribes.

They were the followers of the Prophet Moses and felt great pride for being his followers. In their contrast the two tribes worshipped idols. The Jews would always try to belittle them in their comparison. They would sketch a miserable condition of idol worshippers in the life herefter. They would also talk of the emergence of the prophet (Muhammad) that were mentioned in their holy book. They would say, "A Prophet is about to come. See what we make out of you after his arrival. We will be with him and destroy you totally."

The people of Medina remained in the same miserable condition. At the time when the leaders of Aus had come to Mekka to seek their assistance, they met the Prophet. They had turned down his request. Only Ayas accepted the divine message. Others refused flatly.

But after they returned city, the words of Muhammad and verses of Holy Qur'an would repeatedly come to their minds. They again fought a bloody war. This time they had teamed up with Jews so they were able to post a victory against Khizraj.

Now when both the tribes saw their miserable condition they felt as if everything was lost. A number of people were killed in the war. Financially too they were in their own waterloo. They had lost all their power. Now they came to realize that the Jews had befooled them and they have actually made them their slaves. They also rrealized that the tribe that has posted the victory has also lost everything in this battle.

These were the wars that are still remembered as the War of Buaas. The intensity of these war is still talked in the Arab.

The terror unleashed during the war and the unimaginable loss of lives they suffered made them sit together and take stock of things. It gave them shivers. The two tribes resolved to end the bloody fight and come together to strengthen each other.

They signed a pact. They at the same time also decided that they should have a common leader of the two tribes. Abdullah the son of Ubai was a prominent person of the city and was respected for his wisdom and perception of things. He was also very good at managing things. Abdullah also wielded great influence in the city. Everyone favoured him and so it was decided that he would be crowned the leader.

But when they were taking the decision a decision, better for the two tribes was taken. And that was taken by God. God had some other plans about them.

In the tenth year of the Prophet-hood after the end of the War

of Buas six people from Khizraj tribe came to Mekka for pilgrimage. Two other people from the clan of Najjar also joined them. They were the maternal uncles of Abu Talib.

When they reached at Uqba, a small village before Mekka Prophet came to see these people. He enquired about them as to who they were? "We are coming from Medina and belong to Khizraj tribe" answered they.

"You are the neighbors of Jews. They live there?" asked Muhammad.

"Yes they are our neighbors. We are from the very same place"they answered.

Then Muhammad asked them as to whether they would like to sit with him for a couple of minutes and these people showed their eagerness saying, "We would feel honoured by sitting with you".

They sat with Muhammad carefully listening to him. Muhammad invited them to renounce idol worship and accept Islam. He told them in detail about different aspects of Islam and read Qur'an to them. They were quite amazed at what they listened from Muhammad and said among themselves, "By God, he seems to be the same Prophet Jews are talking about. By God they should not precede us in accepting his prophet-hood."

They accepted Islam. And remembered whatever Muhammad told them. They also said, "O Messenger of God! The sort of division and enmity found in our community is not seen in any other community. It may be possible that God may unite us due to your blessing presence among us and all of us could be brought together around you. We don't see anyone more acceptable to us".

After embracing Islam they completed the pilgrimage with renewed zeal and then went back to their people to give them the good news, the news of the Prophet Jews were talking about. When they got back they came to know that some people of Aus were already aware of the fact and a number of people were eager to see him and embrace his religion.

When the days of pilgrimage came the next year around 12 people of Aus and Khizraj came and met the Prophet at Uqba,

where they had met him the last year. They renounced their old faith there and accepted Islam. They vowed this time that they would not make any partners with God; they wouldn't steal, would not kill their children and would not falsely accuse anybody.

Then the Prophet said, "If you fulfill these vows Allah would reward you with Paradise and if you commit any wrong in these issues then it would depend of the Almighty. If He wishes, He would still reward you or in otherwise case would punish for the wrongdoing."

This allegiance is famous as the First Allegiance of Uqba (*Bait-e-Uqba Ula*). It was the eleventh year of the prophet-hood.

These people returned to Medina after completing the pilgrimage. The Prophet had sent Musab bin Umair with them to teach Qur'an and other teachings of Islam to the people of Medina.

Islam spread like a wildfire in Medina. People were receptive towards it as if they were waiting for it for a long time. It gave them happiness and the peace of mind.

Musab, the young and handsome son of Umair, a rich trader of Mekka, was trying to spread the teachings of the religion of God with his full enthusiasm. Though there were people who felt suspicious and prejudiced towards Islam, but they too would happily renounce their old faiths after listening some verses of the holy Qur'an. They would not only themselves embrace Islam but would also take to others its message and teachings.

Musab continued his mission in Medina, spreading Islam to every house and reaching to everyone in the town till every house became Muslim barring some unfortunate people who were still insisting not to abandon the religion of their forefathers.

Within a year there were more Muslims in Medina than the total number of people who had embraced Islam during the last eleven years in Mekka. When Muhammad's own people were trying to eliminate him and destroy the religion he had brought, people in Medina were trying to bring the whole of Medina around his name. It was no strange thing that this created a sort of love for

the people of Medina among Mekkan Muslims they became very eager to see them. They were restless without meeting these brethren.

Muhammad too was very concerned about these people. Now he had people with him who were prepared to leave everything for him, who were prepared to give up their lives for the Prophet and Islam and who were awaiting his arrival with great zeal. He also received a number of encouraging news from Medina that gave enough indication of the brightness and the great future.

The people of Medina had accepted his teachings from deep inside their hearts and had resolved to protect him even at the cost of their lives. They were very eager to have him with them, to get the honour of his company in their own city. Once in a meet they said: "The Prophet is in trouble in Mekka. He is in search of help but there is no one who could help him. Till what time we will see this shameful scene?" They also decided that this time when they will go for pilgrimage to Mekka they would invite the Prophet to Medina and would assure him all their help and assistance.

When Musab returned to Mekka he apprised the Prophet of these welcoming developments. He also told everything in detail whatever Muhammad wanted to know. When the time of Hajj came a very large group of pilgrims started out from Medina. There were both Muslims and non-believers in the caravan. Though Muslims had intended that they would meet the Prophet, assure him of their assistance and vow to protect his life at the cost of their own lives, but, it was a secret and no one other than Muslims in the caravan was aware of Muslims' this plan.

It was the twelfth year of the prophet-hood. When a third of night passed and it was dark in the night, the people of Quraish were gone to their beds after being consuming the too much wine and all the outside pilgrims too slept, these believers came out of their tents secretly. They were seventy-two men and two women. They secretly started out from their place where they were staying and went towards Uqba a few miles from there. Hidden inside the hillocks they waited for the Prophet to come.

Muhammad came shortly. He was accompanied by Hamzah, his uncle and confidant. He had asked him to keep at any such decisive occasion. He wanted to know as to what the people from Medina wanted and do they have caliber to keep their words. He started the talk saying, "O People of Khizraj. You know the place of Muhammad among us. We have always protected him from his adversaries and have faced them with our full force. He does not face any threat to his life from his enemies while he is among us. But he is eager to go to your place and wants to live with you. If you find that you can fulfill your words and have enough courage to protect him from enemies then we have no problem. But if you have some doubt about it then leave this thought from your minds. We are safe and with great honour."

When Muhammad's uncle completed his speech, the people of Medina said, we listened to you, now Prophet should say something.

The Prophet after reading some verses from holy Qur'an asked, "Would you be able to protect me as you protect your children? I am asking it for the satisfaction of my heart."

Among the people of Medina was Bara, the son of Maroor. He was among the leading figures of Medina and wielded great influence and respect among the people of Medina. He got up without any hesitation and took an allegiance on his hand saying, "By God Who has sent you with His authority we would protect you in every possible way. We will take vow for it. By God we are born fighters. We are ready to fight for you whenever you decide. We never leave the war ground. It has been an established tradition from our forefathers"

Bara was still to conclude his words when Abul Haisam the son of Tayhan stood up and said, "O Messenger of God! We have relations with Jews. All our relations would cease after it. Is it going to happen that when God give you victory you leave us and go back to your people?"

The Prophet smiled effortlessly and said, "Your honour is my honour, your asylum is my asylum. You are mine and I am yours.

Whoever is pardoned by you would get pardon from me too. Your war will be my own war. Your accord will be my accord."

The people were going to extend their hands to take allegiance on the Prophet's hands when Abbas, the son of Ubada stood up and said, "O brothers from Aus and Khizraj! Are you aware that on what you are going to pay your allegiance" (people replied that they were fully aware), Listen! to pay allegiance means that you are going to war with the whole world. If you believe that when you feel threat for your money or when your leaders are killed you will desert Muhammad. If this thought is in your mind then please leave him now. If you desert him in the midway you will get neither this world nor the world hereafter. And if you see that you would be able to bear monetary losses as well as the loss of your leaders"life then you should proceed. You will get the success in both the worlds, here and the life hereafter."

All the people said in unison "yes we are ready to sacrifice money and lives but we will never desert the Prophet. O Prophet of Allah what will be our reward if we keep our allegiance?"

"The Paradise will be yours," answered the Prophet. Then all the people took allegiance at the hands of the Prophet. This allegiance is known as the Second Allegiance of Uqba.

They were still there when somebody cried with full throat power, "O people of Quraish! These people of Medina are planning to go to war with you. They are taking allegiance at Muhammad's hands".

This was not merely a cry. It was a cry that danger has begun. But it too could not reduce the courage of the people of Medina. Instead of any iota of problem on his face Abbas, the son of Ubada said, "O Messenger of Allah Who has sent you with His authority if you allow we can invade the people of Mina". But the Prophet refused and asked them to go back to their tents. Muslims returned to their tents and slept.

In the morning the leaders of Quraish furiously went to the place where the people from Medina were staying. They shouted them down and said with anger, "O people of Medina! God is wit-

ness that we can think of going to war with any one. But we cannot think it about you. What plans are you making? Why do you want to take Muhammad with you? Why do you want to take out swords in our opposition?"

The non-believers from Medina had no knowledge about what had happened the last night. They were totally taken aback by what the leaders of Quraish were saying. They assured them that they had not even talked to Muhammad. The Muslims who were also there did not interfere. Instead they tried to change the topic. Quraish too were puzzled over the total refusal by the people of Medina. They were now uncertain as to whether anything of this nature either happened last night or was it merely a rumour? "Had the informer tried to misguide us? Or the news is true and people of Medina are lying?" They thought.

They started investigation into the matter to dig the truth. In the meanwhile the people of Medina left Mekka immediately to get to the safety as fast as possible. They thought that it would be difficult to get rid of them when they get to the truth.

Ansar had rightly thought as to what was to come. They were able to know the truth sooner than they had thought. Quraish lost patient and sent a team of armed riders behind the Muslims from Medina to chase them.

But Ansar (As the Muslims from Medina were known for their help to the Prophet) had gone. Finally they were able to get hold of one believer from Medina. He was Saad, the son of Ubada. They beat him up badly and tied him down. They brought him to Mekka dragging him on the ground. They were kicking him in disgust.

There were two people in Mekka, Jubair and Harith. Both were traders and used to go to Syria for trade. They would stay with Saad in his safety when they reached Medina and save their assets. These two people came to his rescue and saved him from the oppressive hands of Meccans.

Now Quraish were alerted. They sat together and thought as to what should be done to Muhammad? How he should be failed in his mission? Several sittings of leaders of Quraish were arranged to think on this issue.

"Till now Muhammad was among us alone and we could not harm him. On the other hand it were only we who suffered losses. Now Aus and Khizraj are also with him. What we can do?

"Would Muhammad prevail upon us? His religion has now spread in Medina. Would it also spread to other tribes? Would he be able to destroy us and destroy our beloved city? Would he be able to demolish these idols for which we are fighting for such a long time? They could not find a solution despite the continuous meetings.

For Muslims of Medina the allegiance of Mekka was a fresh beginning for them. They felt peace and satisfaction in their heart that was a new experience for them. Their belief was also strengthening fast and their resolve was being strengthened. Now they would talk of Islam wherever they would be.

Their resolve to destroy idols and their courage steadily increased. Now they would destroy the idols kept in the houses of people who were still idol worshippers. Pagans would feel extremely angry but when it would repeatedly happen to their idols they felt as to how misguided were they? They would realize the insignificance and the impotency of their gods. More people would realize that how wrong they were and would accept Islam.

In this manner the city of Medina was fully prepared to receive the Prophet and when Muhammad come he would be given great respect befitting his stature. The city was also prepared to welcome the companions of the Prophet too who were facing great hardship and torture in Mekka and a new chapter could begin.

Finally the orders to migrate to Medina came from Almighty God. The Prophet allowed all the believers in Mekka to go to Medina. He asked them to go there alone, or with two or three companions. He had asked them to avoid going in groups lest Quraish become alarmed and start chasing them.

A number of believers migrated to Medina in this style and Quraish remained unaware as to what was happening. But for how long the news could be hidden? They finally knew as to what was happening. It angered them tremendously. Now they were behind taking revenge for they were being befooled. Now they were alerted and had arranged people to arrest any believer who was seen-leaving Mekka.

When Umar migrated, it was the same situation. There were two other people with him on the journey, Ayyash, the son of Rabiah and Hisham the son of Aas. They had decided that everyone would come out of Mekka when got the opportunity. They decided to meet at a place outside Mekka. They had also thought that if anyone of them is not able to reach there at the decided time they would think that he has been apprehended by Quraish and would leave.

Umar and Ayyash reached the place at the appointed time, but Hisham did not reach. The duo understood that he has been captured, so they left for Medina without him.

Hisham who was apprehended was taken care of by the pagans. They did everything that could have been done to destroy his determination.

They dealt with Muslims who tried to leave for Medina with extreme oppression. A number of people were done to death by their torturous actions, several women were widowed and children orphaned.

Despite all these they were not satisfied. They were concerned about the Prophet and his plans. They would ponder over the issue themselves and also ask other people they met whether Muhammad would go to Medina after his companions have fled Mekka?

There were suspicious as to whether he would stay here and send his people there as happened in the case of migration to Ethiopia.

These questions were dominating the minds of the people of Quraish.

But they were not merely thinking. They were concerned all these while and thought of ways too counter Muhammad's moves. They were also fearful that like his numerous companions he was able to dodge them and leave for Medina. They were fearful that with all the Muslims of Mekka already there and with his new Medinan followers he would attack Mekka and take care of them.

They increased the guard over Muslims who were always under the gaze of sentinels. But despite all their efforts most of Muslims were able to flee Mekka. Everyone from Hamzah to Uthman and Zubair the son of Awwam were able to flee the city. They would ask someone to take care of their properties and relative and leave.

Only Ali and Abu Bakr were left with the Prophet in Mekka. The other ones left behind were a few those who were arrested by the pagans. They were spending a terrible life in Meccans' captivity.

Finally Abu Bakr too approached the Prophet and asked for permission to leave for Medina. The Prophet said, Don't hurry. It may be possible that we leave together.

Abu Bakr understood that the Prophet's migration was imminent and that it was to happen very soon and that the Prophet is merely waiting for the order from the Almighty God. So he began his preparations.

Hijra, the migration

The time of Hijrah (migration) finally came. Almighty God at that time taught Muhammad a few words of prayer:

"And say: My Lord! Cause me to come in with a firm incoming and go out with a firm outgoing. And give me from Thy presence a sustaining power."

(Surah XVII, 80)

Muslims in Mekka were losing patience with the continuous bout of oppression, torture and humiliations. When the Prophet saw their miseries he allowed them to go to Medina so they could get rid of this daily trouble. This would also reduce the omnipresent threats to the religion of God.

Surreptitiously Muslims headed for Medina, though some were apprehended by the Quraish and could not migrate to Medina. They did everything with such people so they may never gather courage to think of Muhammad and Islam.

Muhammad himself was one of the most sought after target of the fanatic pagans. He was awaiting the nod from the Almighty Lord. He also wished to leave the city of Mekka if the Almighty God allows him so he could be with his companions. He wanted to be with those companions who have given up their hearth and homes for the sake of Allah. He also wanted to be with those companions who in their eagerness to be with their Ansar brethren did not care for their wealth or their family members.

"Who were those fortunate Ansar? They were the people who had assured all the help, assistance and security to Prophet and had taken an allegiance for Islam.

May God keep in peace those people who migrated from their houses and gave up everything only for God's sake. May God also

honour Ansar for their assistance they extended towards their brothers in Islam, gave them refuge, provided them shelter and helped them in every possible way only to please God.

Finally the order to migrate to Medina came. The Prophet resolved to leave Mekka at the earliest. Quraish too had completed their monstrous plans. It was only to be executed.

The pagans were scared of the increasing influence of Islam. The migration to Medina had provided Muslims with a wide ground for *dawah* work. People who came in contact were increasingly being influenced by the blessings of Islam. It was increasingly strengthening Muslims and Islam. Their power was indeed on rise.

Quraish were scared of it. They realized the urgency of the trouble. They also foresaw a war between Muhammad's supporting Ansar and Quraish. They were scared of it as well. What gave them sleepless nights was the fact that Medina was situated on their main trade route with Syria and if the people of Medina wished they could completely stop the trade of Quraish.

They sat together in Darun Nadwa as their meeting place. They were trying to reach a solution to stop this cyclonic surge of Islam. People came with different solutions. One suggested imprisoning Muhammad in a house. But people turned down this suggestion saying By God if it becomes known that Muhammad has been imprisoned, it would be a bad news for us. Muslims in Medina would invade Mekka and would not rest till we release him.

Another suggestion came that if it is not good that Muhammad live in our midst then why not send him to a far off place. Then he would be free to do as he pleases.

Others turned down this proposal too saying "don't you know how sweet and impressive are his words. He can turn anyone in his favour within minutes. This proposal is full of danger and loopholes. He will either reach some tribe and get a prominent place for him or reach Medina. You are fully aware as to how dangerous it would become if he reaches there. He will take his companions and invade Mekka on the first available opportunity."

"What should we do in this situation?" they all said in desperation.

"There is a solution that has probably not come in anyone's mind" Abu Jahl the leader of conspirators fumed.

What is that proposal, everyone looked towards him in hope.

"I propose that we select one of the bravest men from each clan and then assign them to simultaneously attack Muhammad and kill him. It will close this chapter forever and we will be at peace. The best aspect of this proposal is that all the clans of the tribe would be partners in this act and Banu Hashim have no guts to face the might of the whole of Quraish. I am sure they would be forced to accept the blood money.

"How great is your idea!" Everyone congratulated Abu Jahl for his suggestion and it was agreed upon.

The meeting ended. Everyone was happy as if Muhammad was already eliminated from the universe, the trace of his religion has ended and the world has given up and forgotten Islam. The people went and started selecting the brave men who could finally put an end to it and the sort of sword that would be more suited for the job.

"And when those who disbelieve plot against thee (O Muhammad) to wound thee fatally, or to kill thee or to drive thee forth; they plot, but Allah (also) plotteth; and Allah is the best of plotters,"

(Surah VIII, 30)

The pagans had prepared the whole plot. They were happy that Muhammad's blood would be responsibility of the whole of the tribe and that it was necessary for every clan to participate in it. And when all the clans would be involved in this act Banu Hashim could not think of taking revenge.

But on the other hand God had decided that Muhammad would not be harmed, not even slightly. So all the efforts of Quraish proved futile. Almighty God guided Muhammad to safety and they remained waiting for him...

Finally that frightening night came when the enemies of Islam had decided to do away with the Prophet. With newly polished swords in their hands they surrounded his house from all the four sides.

At that time in Arabia entering in a house where women lived was taken as a criminal act, so they remained outside waiting for Muhammad to come out and so they could kill him. Allah had informed the Prophet about the monstrous planning of the pagans. Ali was also with the Prophet in his house. The Prophet said, "I have been ordered to leave Mekka. The enemies too have surrounded the house and they are very desirous to eliminate me." He then added, "Ali I would leave for Medina tonight. You sleep in my bad and wrap my green bed-sheet around you. God willing you would not be harmed. Please return the goods deposited here by all the people and then you too come to Medina."

What sort of deposits he was talking about? Though the people of Quraish were dead against him, they still trusted him most, so they would keep their precious things with Muhammad to be in the safe custody. At that time when Muhammad had to migrate, there were numerous such deposits. It was the reason as to why he did not take Ali to Medina with him and left behind to return such goods to the people to whom they belonged.

This world might have never seen such a scene. At one side there are people who are behind his life and waiting for him to come out so they could kill him and on the other hand is this man who in return is first arranging the return of the deposits of those who are now hunting for his life.

Had Muhammad wished he would have taken all their precious assets with him to Medina and none could have either stopped him or could have said that what he did was wrong and a criminal act. Muhammad at that time was also in dire financial strains. He needed money immensely. But see the level of his trust that he does not take even a single penny from that wealth and instead leaves a brother to first return them and then get back to Medina. He leaves his brother in the midst of danger for the safe return of the

deposits.

Muhammad took leave of Ali and left his house. Both said to each other, "God willing we would meet in Medina again."

Then Ali slept on his bed covering him in the green bed sheet of the Prophet. Every moment was proving torturous for the enemies who were waiting for Muhammad to appear and they finish the job. When it was quite late they tried to see through the door inside the house and said, "See he is sleeping in his green bed sheet".

Then they awaited Muhammad to come out of his house so they attack him together.

But before the end of the night Muhammad while reciting the first few verses of Surah Yasin, took a handful of dust in his hands and threw it towards the people who were standing on guard. It seemed the dust blinded the people for a while and they failed to see Muhammad.

As per the program, Muhammad came to the house of Abu Bakr. Three days ago too Muhammad had gone to Abu Bakr's house in the afternoon. Abu Bakr came out of the house and said, "It must be something very important that the Prophet has come here". The Prophet asked him to get that portion of the house cleared of anyone.

Abu Bakr said that there was none other than only Prophet's wife (Aisha had been married to the Prophet at that time).

"Almighty God has permitted us to leave for Medina. We should also leave the city now."

Abu Bakr asks impatiently "I sacrifice my parents on you O Messenger of God, would I also get the honour to accompany you in this journey?"

"Yes. You will be with me" The Prophet answered and then asked him to start preparations.

This great news brought the tears of happiness and gratefulness in the eyes of Abu Bakr. He said, "I have arranged some essentials for the journey. I have also arranged two camels and have also hired Abdullah bin Arqat. His company would make the trav-

el easy".

Then Muhammad said, "we wouldn't need camels in the initial days. First we will go to southward and stay for a couple of days in one cave of the Hills of Thaur."

Abu Bakr understood as to what it meant to go the opposite side. He had earlier seen the great wisdom and insight of Prophet. He knew how good he planned that would only frustrate the enemy.

The hill of Thaur is some five miles south of Mekka and lies in the way of Yemen. The Prophet had the idea that anyone who would hear that Muhammad has left the city would assume that he has gone to Medina and would hurry towards north side because Medina lies on the north side of Mekka. So Muhammad planned that the chasers get frustrated and fail to know where they had gone.

On that night when the enemies had surrounded his house he went to Abu Bakr's house. He took him along and came out from a window that opened in the backyards of the house.

In the safety of the night they hurried towards the Cave of Thaur.

In the wee hours of morning Ali got up and got out of the bed. When the noise came the enemies too were alerted that the time had indeed come.

But who was this man coming out of Muhammad's house?!!!

They would repeatedly see through a small hole in the door and feel puzzled to find Ali there. They said among them, "It is not Muhammad. It is the son of Abu Talib."

Where Is Muhammad? Where has he gone? These were the questions they asked immediately. He was in the house, where he is gone?

"Were we waiting the whole night for Ali to come they asked? Had we taken Ali as Muhammad? Why was Ali sleeping on Muhammad's bed tonight? They were asking these questions among themselves. But there was none to answer them. People started streaming to the place to see how Muhammad was done to

death? But when they reached there they came to know that Muhammad was not there, and that Muhammad had left for some place.

People were fuming with rage. They entered the house and asked Ali as to where his brother had gone? He said, I don't know".

They beat him badly and would repeatedly ask him the same question, but he would always answer the same.

When they were unable to know anything from Ali they brought him to Kaba and imprisoned him there. They would beat him up, slap him and torture him in all the possible ways till some of his relatives came to his rescue. In this way Ali was able to come out of the torturous hands of Quraish.

The leaders of Quraish were both angry and annoyed that Muhammad was able to dodge them on the very night when they had planned to kill him. Taken aback some of them ran north and some on the south. Most people paid attention to the northern route, the way to Medina. A few people went to Abu Bakr's house as they knew that he was his best friend and Muhammad had special terms with him. Abu Jahl was one of the people who went to the house of Abu Bakr. When he knocked on the door, Abu Bakr's elder daughter Asma came out of the house.

"Don't lie. Tell me truth. Where is your father" Abu Jahl asked her?

"Why do I need to speak untruth? I don't know where is he"Asma said without any trace of fear in her voice.

The enemies understood that Abu Bakr too had fled with Muhammad. Full of rage Abu Jahl slapped the young lady on her cheeks with his full force. The enemies then returned and searched for a person who could find them by tracing through their steps.

After a long search they were finally able to get a person who was expert in recognizing the signs of steps. He started behind the steps of the Prophet and his companion. Following those signs of steps he came out of Mekka. People were amazed when Suraqa headed for south. Everyone was saying, where has he gone, to the north or south?

The enemies were not able to understand anything. But still they followed Suraqa hoping to get Muhammad. Suraqa continued his search behind the footsteps on the ground. Then he started climbing the Thaur Hill.

God had promised to save the Prophet. He would fail every effort of the enemies to apprehend Muhammad and would not allow any harm to reach him. Who can be more truthful than He?

Suraqa climbed on the hill. But then he stopped. He was confused as well as disheartened. He was not able to understand as to where he should go? When the enemies saw his condition they asked, as to why he has stopped and was everything all right?

"They have come to this stone, but I don't know where they went from here," said Suraqa.

People laughed at him saying "what has happened to you today? You never behaved in this manner before."

Then they saw a shepherd grazing his herd of goats. "Have you seen two people coming this way?" they asked him.

"I have not seen. But you should see in the cave. They may be there," answered he.

The people of Quraish hurried towards the cave with all their arms. They all wished that they could kill him and he be known as the killer.

At that time Muhammad was offering prayers and Abu Bakr was fearful that the enemies might get to them. He was listening the voices of the enemies. The sounds of their shoes gave enough indication that they were coming in this direction. As the sounds neared Abu Bakr's fears increased. Abu Bakr was silent. He wished as if he could hide the Prophet inside his heart.

When the Prophet completed his prayers, Abu Bakr was very concerned for the safety of the Prophet. His face said fully as to how apprehensive he was. He knew everything and tried to console saying, "Fear not, God is with us". A man from Quraish hurried towards the cave. After taking a few steps he returned back with sorrow and distress written on his face. His friends were also coming behind him. They too stopped when they saw him returning

from that point. "What happened? Why didn't you see inside the cave?" they all asked him.

"Muhammad would have not even born when the spider made it her house. Two wild pigeons have also built their nest on the face of the cave and there is a big tree just in front of that. I have realized that there cannot be anyone inside," said he.

Abu Bakr too heard this voice and understood that God had made these arrangements to save His Prophet. Otherwise the enemies had almost found them. They were still there wandering here and there. Abu Bakr was seeing their feet that were visible from inside the cave.

"If they look at their feet they would find us" Abu Bakr murmured in the ears of the Prophet.

"What is your opinion about those two people whose third companion is Allah?" asked the Prophet in order to encourage Abu Bakr.

The enemies then returned from there. Now after this place they were also looking at other nearby places. The daylong search had not dampened their spirits. This whole frantic effort by so many people was due to the announcement made by Quraish that whoever catches him would get 100 camels. Everyone wanted to get these hundred camels. It was a great fortune for them.

The Prophet and Abu Bakr spent the whole day inside the cave. Abu Bakr's son Abdullah was trying to find out as to what Quraish were planning? He would come in the night and would inform them about the planning of the Quraish. Asma would also accompany him. She would bring food for the two from their house. Abu Bakr's slave Aamir the son of Fuhaira would bring goats in the guise of grazing them and would give their milk to Muhammad and his own master. The trio would then return to their homes. Abdulah and his sister would be in front and Aamir with his flock behind so the signs of their steps are erased. Three days were passed in this manner. The search for Muhammad and Abu Bakr had also stopped. The people who were trying to chase them had also returned, thinking that by now they would have

completed the most part of their journey and Muhammad would have gone where he would have intended.

Abdullah would regularly bring the news to his father. He would also tell as to how humiliated the leaders of Quraish were after the escape of the Prophet. When Abu Bakr heard it he asked him to bring the two camels he had arranged for this purpose. He warned him against saying anything in this regard to anyone and also asked him to call Abdullah bin Arqat. He had hired him to guide to Medina from a road less travel.

In the evening Abdulah prepared himself for the Cave of Thur. Asma and their slave Aamir was with them. Behind them was Abdullah the son of Arqat who was brining the two camels with him. He was on his own camel. They reached there shortly. Abu Bakr presented the camel that was better in health for the Prophet and asked him to climb on that.

But Muhammad had never liked to be under obligation of anyone. So he said, take the price for this camel. Despite all insistence of Abu Bakr he was not ready to take it for free and insisted that Abu Bakr takes its price.

Abu Bakr was forced to take the price for the camel. Asma arranged the essentials for the journey. She had brought food and a pot full of water. These two had to be put on camel. But there was no rope to tie them with the camel.

An idea came to her mind. She tore the Nitaq in two parts and tied those things with that. It was the reason as to why she was called Zatun Nitaqain (Of two Nitaq).

Muhammad and Abu Bakr both mounteds on their camels. Abdullah too went on his camel. Abu Bakr took his slave along so that he could be of some use in the journey. In the guidance of Abdullah the son of Arqat the group proceeded towards Medina. They had taken the route along the coastline of the Red Sea. This route was not the main route for Medina and was very remote, inaccessible and isolated.

All plans of Quraish were frustrated. They were immensely aggrieved. They would talk of this failure whenever they got together. They would always feel at loss on the escape of Muhammad. One day while they were cursing themselves for his escape a man who had apparently returned from a long journey entered the room and said, "While I was coming from the sea shore, I saw three people traveling on the way. I believe they were Muhammad and his companions.

A man by the name Suraqa was also sitting there. He was the son of Jasham and was very intelligent. When he heard it, he understood that he is right and indeed he has seen Muhammad. But he wanted to get the prized catch to get hundred camels. To misguide and distract people's attention he said, They would have long crossed the place. It is impossible to get them now. He has probably seen some of my people who had gone recently".

People nodded in agreement. Nobody gave heed as to what that person had said. Suraqa meanwhile went to his house, took arms and asked his servant to take his horse to the outskirts of the city. He warned him not to say anything in this regard to any one as he wanted that no one sees him leaving the place. After reaching the outskirts of Mekkâ he rode his horse and hurried towards that secluded route.

Is it possible for Suraqa to get the Prophet, when Allah had saved him and his companions from the threat in the cave? That was absolutely impossible. When God has promised to take him to safety no one could touch him. God does not break His promises.

Suraqa had not gone very far when his horse suffered a blow. Suraqa was on the verge of falling from the back of the horse but could save him in the nick of time. He again hurried the horse. It started running like the air. It had not gone much far when it again suffered a blow. Suraqa still did not give up. He rearranged his horse and hurried towards his prized catch once again. But now he was a bit scared of the people he was chasing. He was also disappointed and hopeless. But unmindful of his thoughts his horse was running on its full speed.

Muhammad and his team had traveled for one whole night and day without taking rest anywhere. They neither saw any enemy nor any chaser so far. So Abu Bakr felt secure and all his troubles and dreadful thoughts ended. He was sure that the Prophet was out of the danger limit.

It was the next afternoon. The sun was as hot as anything and it felt as if it could roast the body. Abu Bakr thought that the Prophet could take rest for a little while before proceeding further. When he looked around he saw that there was shadow under one small hillock, he thought the place appropriate so they stopped there, got down and he presented the food before the Prophet. They all sat together and had food. The Prophet took rest for some time.

Now the heat of the son was on the decline. A shepherd who was grazing his herd nearby was asked by Abu Bakr to bring some milk. He brought the milk before Muhammad and asked him to drink. After he drank the milk, the Prophet said that they should now leave the place soon.

They had merely started from there when Abu Bakr saw toward his left. He saw that a horse rider was leaping towards them in full speed. He became anxious and attracted the Prophet's attention towards him saying, "Now we are apprehended".

But the Prophet did not look scared and said, "Abu Bakr! Don't be scared. God is with us."

And God was indeed with them.

Suraqa was very near to them now, almost in their full gaze. The sound of his horse' feet was now reaching to them. He was very near to them. But lo! his horse again suffers a blow, half of horse' feet were now inside the dust and the rider was thrown at a distance on the ground. His face became laced with dust on the ground. He lost any hope whatsoever. He was sure that this was not an auspicious sign and that God was not in favour of what he was trying to do. So he didn't mount his horse again and asked the Prophet, "I am Suraqa, the son of Jasham. Please stop for a while. By God I will not harm you". The Prophet asked Abu Bakr to ask

him as to what he wanted?

"Tell, what do you want?" Abu Bakr asked Suraqa.

"An assurance of forgiveness" said he.

The Prophet accepted his request and asked Abu Bakr to write. Abu Bakr wrote on a piece of leather whatever the Prophet asked him to write. Then the piece was given to Suraqa. He took that, mounted on his horse and returned to Mekka.

After this episode Suraqa did not tell anyone as to what happened to him. Now he loved the Prophet immensely as he had come to know that he was the true Prophet of God. He would mislead anyone who would think of going on that route where the Prophet had gone.

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After the Prophet's migration to Medina, there was no attraction left for Ali in Mekka. Not only was there a constant threat to his life but also a constant thought of being away from him. It was becoming hard for him to spend even a moment in Mekka and he would always think of going to Medina and be with the Prophet and other believers. When he completed the job assigned to him by the Prophet he started for Medina at the very first available opportunity. He had no means to travel the long distance between Mekka and Medina. There was neither any horse nor a camel at his disposal. He started on foot and started walking very fast.

Glory be to God! It was the love and selflessness of Ali for the Prophet. How great a man he was and how devoted was he to him.

The long route, and without any means, and that too on foot. But still Ali had started out alone. The route was scary, there was neither food or water available on the route. And to add to misery was the sun that became as hot as anything. But these things were on one side and the love and association with the Prophet on the other. So these things could not deter him. He remained walking on the foot, alone without anything. He had only one aim. And that was to reach to Medina and see the Prophet and other believers.

He walked and walked. Continued walking even when he was

tired immensely. He could not collect power to take a single step further, but again his determination would come to his rescue. It was a fatal attraction that was attracting him towards Medina. Blood started streaming out of his body. But he could not even imagine to stop and get rest anywhere. He did not stop to take rest and bore with great determination the extreme pain he was feeling in his whole body. The love and affection of the Prophet was attracting him and propelling him to take a step and then again and again. And he walked and walked.

Three Kilometers before Medina city lies a small hamlet. It was situated on a small hillock and was known as Quba and Aliya. Several leading figures of the newly converted Muslims of the city lived there. When the Prophet came here, he spent 14 days in this small hamlet where he also inaugurated a mosque, now famous as the Mosque of Quba.

Ali was able to meet Prophet here itself. His happiness had no bounds. He had three reasons to celebrate. One was the happiness of meting Prophet, getting rid of the enemies who were behind his life every minute and the happiness of meeting his friends. When 14 days passed Muhammad surrounded by his companions headed for Medina city.

The news of Muhammad's arrival in the city had reached long before and the people were awaiting their arrival with bated breath. It was a memorable occasion with everyone irrespective of the religious leaning was waiting for him. Even young children were showing their happiness by singing the welcome songs and dancing. They were walking on the streets of the city saying that the Prophet was to arrive there.

People would daily go out of the city and would look towards the route to Mekka. They would wait for him for hours before getting back. Once when they had returned after waiting for hours for his entourage, a cry came from a hillock announcing the arrival of Muhammad. "The Prophet has arrived," said a voice.

This was the sentence the people of Medina were waiting for weeks. It enthused them so much that the whole city came out on

the streets to give him a historical welcome.

The announcement was made by a Jew who like others was awaiting his arrival. He had seen that how eagerly Muslims were waiting for Muhammad to arrive. Their happiness did not have any bound.

Now when he saw some people heading for Medina he knew that the man for whom the whole city was waiting has finally arrived. So he cried in joy "People the person for whom you were waiting has finally come".

Most of the people did not recognize the Prophet, because they had never seen him before. But their heart fully recognized him due to their immense love for him.

Under a date tree the Prophet met his companions. When Abu Bakr saw that the people were not able to recognize him, he in order to protect the Prophet from heat covered him with a cloth. Then people came to know that who was the Prophet.

It was a Friday. The time of prayer came in the midst of this journey. Muhammad at that time was passing through the area of Bani Salim. He offered prayers there itself. All his companions offered the prayer behind him.

The Prophet then entered the city, the place that received the Prophet and his companions with open heart and embraced him with great love. It helped him when his own people ditched him and tried to destroy him and his people who accepted the religion God had sent him with.

His maternal relatives who belonged to the clan of Banu Najjar came to receive him in full war gear. They and other supporters had surrounded him in numerous queues.

It was a splendid scene. Innumerable occasions of celebrations had come and numerous grand meetings were organized in the city, but never this sort of scene was seen in the city.

Every family of Medina was eager that the Prophet stays in their house. They would invite him that O Prophet see, this is our house, these are our assets and there are we with our lives to sacrifice it for you, please honour us with your stay here. The Prophet

would pray in their favour, thank for their offer. Muhammad was mounted at that time on his camel. He had loosened it saying that I would stay where God would stay me.

The camel was walking in the street of Medina, surrounded by the companions of the Prophet. They were shouting with happiness, "Glory be to God, Glory be to God. The Messenger of God has arrived."

The young girls were singing welcome song. They would say,

"The moon has finally come in our midst"

Women were looking at this splendid scene from their rooftops. They were eager to have a look at the Prophet. Men too were occupying high places to clearly see the Prophet and people accompanying him and greet him.

The camel did not stop. It continued walking. Then suddenly it stopped at a place and sat there itself. This place belonged to two orphans of the clan of Banu Najjar and there were a few graves besides some date trees.

When the camel sat there Muhammad stepped down and asked as to who owned the land? The Prophet wanted to construct mosque there.

Maaz, the son of Afra came forward and said, "O Messenger of God the land belongs to two orphans named Sahl and Suhail. Their father has died and now both of them are under my custody. You please construct the mosque here. They would readily handover the land to you". Muhammad called the two young children. They were ready to donate the land for free for the Prophet but Muhammad did not like the idea. He paid for the land and then it was flattened and the construction work for mosque began.

Muhammad stayed in the house of Abu Ayyub Ansari. He was extremely happy over his luck and the fact that Muhammad was his guest. He would take care for everything. For seven months Muhammad stayed with him. During this period the construction work of the mosque was completed. Some rooms were also constructed adjoining the mosque for the Ummahatul Momineen (mothers of the believers). The wives of the Prophet were called in

this manner. Later the Prophet shifted to the newly built mosque.

The people of the clan of Banu Najjar were immensely happy for being the neighbors of the Prophet. Small girls would take pride in the fact. They would sing songs like:

We are the daughters of Banu Najjar. See how fortunate are we? Muhammad would stay among us.

The initial stay of the Prophet was very peaceful. There was no fear of anything. There were no goons of Quraish chasing him and his companions. There was no threat from anyone. Muhammad also called his wives there. His daughters were also brought there from Mekka. Abu Bakr asked his son Abdullah to bring all the family to Medina. Others too followed and brought their families to Medina. Most of the Muslims who had stayed in Mekka so far too slowly came and joined with their Muslim brethren in Medina. These people had also brought their wives along with them. But they had come there empty handed with no asset whatsoever with them. At that time Ansar came to their rescue like always. They took care of their needs. But still there was no systematic arrangement to take care of their needs.

To take care of the miserable condition of these people and to have a permanent arrangement the Prophet one day assembled all the Muslims and told Ansar that migrants were their brothers.

Then he would call an Ansar and a Migrant and would say that both of you are brothers from today.

It is unbelievable but true. Ansar treated those destitute migrants with exemplary magnanimity and from that day took them as their real brothers. They took them along to their houses, made arrangements for their stay there. Even gave a part of their properties to them.

Now Medina seemed to be their own city and they were part of the city.

This brotherhood had great benefit besides this obvious peace of mind for the migrants. It created an unbreakable bond between

Ansar and Migrants. Their love for each other was strengthened. No one could think of anything without a thought for the same thing being with their brother also. It looked, as if they were a part of the other half.

The migrants had been traders from time immemorial. They were hard working and despised sitting without doing anything. Some of them started their business while some others started tilling the lands of their Ansar brothers. As it is said the work does not go in vain, their business flourished. They were able to reestablish their businesses here too.

But there were others who had no business, no land to till and so special arrangements were essential for them. They were not able to do any business either. They had nothing to eat and would not find anything to eat for even days. The Prophet was especially concerned about them. These people would get some stipend from the small treasury. Arrangement was also made for their stay besides the Mosque of the Prophet.

There was a considerably large population of Jews in Medina city too. They were moneylenders and had booming business. Their business interests were spread not only across Arab but also in Syria and other neighboring countries. Their wealth had made them the unquestioned leaders of Medina. There was only a single way for the establishment of peace in Medina, and that was in their happiness. They must be kept happy to have peace in the city.

Muhammad thought that he should have some formal accord with the Jews so Muslims and they could coexist peacefully. No one should dare to belittle others' religion and no one usurps other's wealth. He also proposed that in case of an attack on the city, Muslims and Jews together face the enemy and share the booty among them. Muhammad talked to Jews in this respect. They readily agreed.

There were some Jews who were really sincere in their religion. When they saw the Prophet they understood that he was the messenger of Allah and that their books had given indications about his imminent arrival. They also knew that he was indeed calling

towards the same religion that they had been following so far. When they knew fully that indeed he was the same Prophet they embraced Islam. But most Jews were not prepared to accept the obvious fact. They thought that it would harm their interests and weaken them.

Though initially they were happy when the Muslims and the Prophet arrived in the city. They also readily agreed on the accord proposed by the Prophet. They wanted to bring Muslims with them and perpetuate their same tactics that they had been continuing for such a long time. They had also thought that if Muslims come along with them and accept their religion then they would be able to dominate the whole of Arabia. They wanted to eliminate Christianity with the help of these Muslims.

In fact Jews were waiting for the Prophet for quite a long time. They had gone to the extent of staying wherever they hoped the Prophet might come. They were sure that the new Prophet would follow their own religion and whenever he comes they were sure to get power and dominance.

But they were greatly disappointed when they saw that it was an altogether different religion and was talking of everything that was new for them. When they realized it his presence and the presence of his companions became unbearable for them.

They did not care for the accord they had signed with Muhammad and started opposing him, albeit surreptitiously. They were exceedingly good at creating suspicion between people. "Create rift among others and rule" was their credo and they used it against Muslims in a big way. They tried to create rift among Muslims but failed miserably.

They still did not lose hope. They took a new route and started creating suspicion against Muslims in the minds of pagans who were in Medina. They took their words as truth and started opposing Muslims. But they had miserably failed in regard of Muslims, who could never be fooled bys them.

Calling towards truth under the shadow of swords

Believers had faced all the threats and tortures in Mekka without ever responding to them in kind. They never retaliated. But when torture and abuses became unbearable they were allowed to migrate to Madinah. Muslims started gaining strength in Madinah with the local converts.

Pagans were immensely jealous of increasing influence of Muslims and started planning to invade Madinah and destroy Muslims. They started planning to invade Madinah. At that time Allah allowed Muslims to retaliate in case of invasion. They were asked to use force if force was being used to defeat them. Now they were asked to answer them in kind.

To add to Muslims' woes another group was created against Muslims. This was the group of hypocrites. This group was one of the worst enemies of Islam and they were a great danger for Islam and Muslims. The worst thing about them was that they would present them as Muslims and great supporters of Islam. God ordered Muslims to treat them sternly.

Mekka was the birthplace of the Prophet as well as of most of the migrants. They immensely loved their hometown. But the place was made absolutely hostile and unlivable for them. So they were forced to migrate from there and take refuge in an alien land. They had to sacrifice their wealth and their businesses. Kaba was also made unapproachable for them. Pilgrimage for them was banned too. It had pained Muslims more than anyone had expected. Now when they were allowed to use force against force they started

looking towards Mekka.

They had been allowed to fight if anyone fights them. Sword was allowed to be used for defence. Muslims resolved to end this reign of terror. Pagans had been a constant threat to the religion of God, and they resolved to take care of this threat and free Kaba from their hands.

Now Muslims tried to know as to what the pagans of Mekka were planning. They knew well that they would not take rest and would not leave Muslims prosper. They would go out in small groups and would try to trouble the caravans of Meccans if they could find them.

These small groups (*saraya* in Arabic) would consist of people ranging from fifty to hundred. Five such *saraya* are now remembered for their importance. One was headed by Hamzah, the other one by Ubaidah the son of Harith, the third by Sad the son of Abi Waqqas, the fourth by Abdullah the son of Hajsh and the fifth included the Prophet himself. To be true they never fought any organized war directly with the Meccans.

These groups did one very important thing. Whenever they would go out they would also visit some nearby tribes and would conclude treaty of peace with them. There was a threat that if they go against Madinah, the people in the city had reason to fear. These tribes readily agreed to conclude treaties with Muslims. Some of them went to the extent of promising help and assistance at time of war.

The Quraish were concerned when they knew that people of Madinah had taken allegiance at the hands of Muhammad and have vowed to give up their lives for his safety. They were sure that these were not auspicious signals for them.

When Prophet was able to safely migrate from Mekka the fears came alive to their minds. They were sure that Muslims would respond to them in kind whenever they get some power. The greatest threat they had was regarding the safety of their trade carvans. The important trade route of Syria was very near to Madinah and Muslims in Madinah could easily jeopardize their booming trade

interests. This threat was a reality now.

Abu Sufyan was one of the more influential leaders of Quraish. The son of Harb he was also a successful businessman. Once accompanied by a large number of people, he started out for Syria for business. Muslims came to know of the news due to their spies who had spread their network by now.

Muslims would try to scare the trade caravans of Meccans. Abu Sufyan fully aware of the threat perceived it in advance and sent a man to Mekka to make people there aware of the threat. This caravan had done a very good business and was returning with great profit. He was scared that the few people who were with him would not be able to defend them if Muslims attacked.

He wished that the people of Mekka come to their help so they could be saved from any threat from Muslims.

Abu Sufyan had ordered Zamzam the son of Amar to cut both the ears of his camel, tear his cloth and cry for help after reaching Mekka.

It was a custom in Mekka. Whenever there would be any threat people would do the same thing and the whole city would know and run for help.

It was the second year of Hijrah (migration). One night Aateka, daughter of Abdul Muttalib saw a terrible dream. Aateka who was scared by the dream got up in the middle of the night. She was shivering with fear.

She had seen in her dream that a man mounted on the back of his camel is fast coming towards Mekka. After reaching to Atbah he stops for a while and cries "O people of Quraish come to your slaughterhouse within three days". People gather after listening to him. Then he enters Kaba and people were behind him. His camel takes him on the roof of Kaba and he again cries with full force, "O people of Quraish come to your slaughterhouse within three days". Then his camel hurries to Abu Qais hill and again cried, "O people of Quraish come to your slaughterhouse within three days".

Then he takes a hillock in his hands and throws it on the earth with his full might. It breaks into pieces and its particles enter every house of Mekka. No house remains safe from that.

Aateka called her brother Abbas and recounted the whole dream to him. After listening to her he advised her not to tell the dream to anyone.

But Abbas could not control himself. Despite the fact that he had advised his sister against telling it to anyone, he himself could not control him and told about her dream to one of his friends. It spread like wildfire in the whole Mekka. Abu Jahl and his cohorts too came to know about it. They laughed at Aateka. Taunting Abbas he said, "Oh till now only men of your family used to claim to be Prophets but now your women are also claiming Prophethood."

But Aateka's dream was true. On the third day Zamzam reached Mekka and did the same as Abu Sufyan had advised him to do. He tore his shirt and cut the ears of his camels and then frantically cried, "O People of Quraish, Take care of the trade caravan coming from Syria. It is bringing great gifts and returns for you. Save it from Muhammad and his people. They may loot it. Help. Help."

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Who is unaware of the honour of Quraish? They would vow to take revenge whenever any of their relatives gets killed by someone and the wars would continue for generations. Whole tribes would perish in such bloody wars, but these wars would not end.

Arabs were not much fond of education. But if someone was killed, Quraish would get the name of the person killed written on a piece of paper and would memorize it even after generations so that they take revenge of the killing. Wahis and Basus, two bloody wars were fought for merely a single killing and continued for four decades. Thousands of people were consumed in these wars.

It was Rajab, the seventh month of the Muslim lunar calendar. Muhammad sent 12 people to Nakhla so they could spy on

Quraish and their plans. On this occasion they saw a caravan of Quraish and they looted that caravan. On this occasion one man from the enemy was also killed. They also took two other people in their custody. The man killed in the encounter was Amar the son of Hazrami. When the Prophet came to know of the incident he showed his displeasure over the incident and said, "I did not send you for this purpose".

Quraish were fuming when they came to know about this incident. And vowed to take revenge from Muslims. Zamzam's call added fuel to fire. Now they started to making arrangements for war and began selecting people who could go to fight a war and win it for them. Everyone was determined to take revenge from Muhammad. Their resolve to take revenge was exemplary. Everyone was trying to incite others to take part in the war they were planning to fight.

All the leaders of Quraish were going with their army except Abu Lahab who had hired a man to go to war in his place. He had paid four thousand dirhams.

They would rebuke anyone who would not like to go with the troops and would try to belittle him by calling him a coward. Finally pressed to the wall he would finally give his nod.

There were people who were in the frontline inciting people. Suhail, a man who used to fight in cavalry said while trying to arouse others: "O sons of Ghalib, Would you remain sitting while Muslims loot your camels and take control of all the goods and money of your trade caravan. I am prepared to give money if anyone of you needs it and provide to give arms if someone needs it"

The Quraish started out with an impressive line up. They had nine hundred fifty fully armed men. They had hundred people in their cavalry and seven hundred camels. Besides their foot soldiers were wearing armors. They had also taken a number of women with them who were singing victory songs in order to the morale of the army high. They would also sing songs that would denounce the Prophet and belittle his companions. They were more than enough to set any one's mind on fire.

With great enthusiasm this army of the pagans started out from Mekka. They were all behaving as if they had won the war. They had not only the aim to save the caravan of Abu Sufyan but also completely destroy the danger that had emerged after the migration of Muslims to Madinah to ensure the safety of their trade route.

Abu Sufyan in the meantime was proceeding towards Mekka and was very near to Hijaz. Terrified as he was, he was trying his best to avoid getting into the hands of Muslims. He was also waiting for Zamzam and the help he was sure he would be bringing with him. But no one not even Zamzam came to him.

When the night came when he had to reach to the spring of Badr, the people of the caravan said that their camels were trying to hurry towards the spring of Badr. It was notwithstanding the fact that camels had fully drunk water just a day earlier. Camels don't need water so frequently.

When the people of the caravan saw they were both amazed and terrified because the camels never do like this. The night was also very dark and they were not able to see even their surroundings. They were now scared and fearful.

Abu Sufyan now ordered the people of caravan to change its routs. He was fearful that Muslims would be waiting for them somewhere and probably they were hiding somewhere near Badr. He took another route and started going towards Mekka from coastline.

On the other hand the Army of Meccans started out from the city. They would stop wherever they could find water. There they would sacrifice camels, eat themselves and invite others to join them and would consume wine. And then only they would proceed further.

So in this way they were marching towards Madinah. While on their way a man from Mekka came to them. He said: "O brothers, your trade caravan has safely reached Mekka and Muhammad could not harm them. It will be better if you return to Mekka and don't think of fighting the people of Madinah. You would not be able to

face them. O brothers of Quraish, what is the use of going forward? You had come out to save the caravan and your purpose is complete. God Himself saved the caravan".

The man had come for their good. But they were not prepared to listen to any wise counsel. Most of the people refused flatly. The people of Bani Hashim clan understood the wisdom behind what he was saying and so they were eager to return. When Abu Jahl came to know of their intention, he became furious and said, "By God we would not return. We would go at least to Badr." Badr was a village some 80 miles fro Madinah and a grand feast was organized every year in the village.

The man then returned to Abu Sufyan disappointed and said as to what had happened. He also said as to what he had been answered by Abu Jahl. Abu Sufyan was greatly disappointed as to what was happening. He said in disgust:

"Oh my people! This all is the doing of Abu Jahl. He must be the one who refused to return because he is the leader of the people there today. But he has not done the right thing to the people of Mekka. He had given him a wise counsel but he has refused to listen a wise counsel. Not following a good advice results in destruction."

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When the Prophet came to know about it he understood that this was a time to take a final decision. He was very clear in his mind that if they do not act courageously the religion of God would be destroyed forever and there would be no hope of its revival.

It was not even two years since their arrival to Madinah. The migrants were still not fully settled, Ansar still not well trained and there were Jews who were always ready to ditch them from behind. And there was always a fear from hypocrites. He was very clear in his mind that if in this situation Pagans of Quraish attack the Muslims of Madinah, it was possible that that they could destroy them. But even if they did not attack them and were able to take

the caravan to safety and Muslims remain inside their houses not challenging them, then even everyone in Arabia would become dominant over them and it would become impossible to live honorably in Arabia. Not only pagans of Madinah would be able to challenge them, Jews and Hypocrites would also put them in a spot and Muslims would cease to be a power. Prophet decided that it was time to take action and he determined that he would go out and challenge pagans with whatever power he had at his disposal and then it would be seen who was more determined.

Muhammad asked all his people from both Ansar and Migrants to assemble. He presented the whole situation before them, making it clear that on north there was a trade caravan and on the south a powerful army of Quraish was coming. Then he asked as to where they wanted to go? A majority of the people first said, that they wanted to go towards the trade caravan. But the Prophet had some other thing in his mind so he repeated his question.

Extremely wise as Abu Bakr was he understood as to what the Prophet had in mind. So he stood up and delivered a speech that was full of grit, eagerness to sacrifice everything for Islam and determination. Umar stood up after Abu Bakr and spoke of bravery and his determination to sacrifice everything for the Prophet and Islam. Then Miqdad the son of Amar spoke. He said: "O Messenger of Allah! Ask us to accompany you wherever you want. We are with you. We are not like sons of Israel who had said to their Prophet that you and your God go and fight. We are not going anywhere. But we say that you go, accompanied by your God. We are with you and we will fight with you shoulder to shoulder. Till any watchful eye of our people is intact there is no danger for you."

When the Prophet heard these words from Miqdad, his face brightened. He praised him and prayed in his favour and then said to others, "O people you too should speak something".

Ansar understood that the Prophet wanted to listen something from them on the issue. It was because it was the first occasion

when Ansar had to participate in any real war. They had not been asked for anything similar in the past.

Saad the son of Maaz was one of the more influential people of Ansar. When he heard it he stood and said, "O Prophet of God you were probably indicating towards us". The Prophet nodded in affirmation and said that he wanted to listen something from the side of the people of Madinah.

Saad saying that he was representing the people of Madinah said, "O Messenger of Allah we have accepted you as the Prophet. We have taken you as true messenger of Allah. We have vowed that your claims are true. We have also promised to follow you. Now O Prophet of Allah you do that you have planned to do. By God if you ask us to jump with you in the see we would happily jump into it. None of us is going to stay back. You are free to conclude treaty with anyone and free to go to war with anyone. Our wealth is under your feet. You can take it as much as you want. The more you would take the more we would be happy. We have never been on that route nor I am aware of that route but be assured we are not going to run away from enemy. We are born fighters like loin and always fight to finish. We expect that we would show the sort of bravery that would make you happy."

The speech full of emotion and selflessness greatly pleased the Prophet. He thanked Saad and prayed for him saying, "His mercy and help is with you. He has promised to help us with a big group and by God I am seeing the slaughter house of our enemies."

The people now fully understood that they are going to face the army of the enemy and not to his trade caravan.

It was the 9th month of Ramadhan in the second year of Hijrah. When the Army of Madinah reached at Abi Inbah, one mile outside Madinah, the Prophet inspected his Army. He sent back those boys who were younger than the prescribed age. The Army then marched from there. On Wednesday night this Army of Muslims reached a place called Roha. After reaching there the Prophet did the ablution and offered prayers. After concluding the last Rakah of the prayer he cursed the pagans and then said, O

God, Abu Jahl is the Pharaoh of this age. Please get rid of this Pharaoh."

The same day Prophet organized his troops in the style of a regular army, handed over the flag of Migrants to Musab, Khizraj to Habbab son of Munzir and that of Aus to Saad bin Maaz.

Then the Prophet proceeded forward with his troops. They were 313 in all. This small army had seventy camels and only three horses. The Army stopped near Badr. The Prophet asked Ali, Zubair and Saad the son of Waqqas to go forward and bring all the relevant information about the enemy. Then the Prophet indicating towards a small hill said that on the back of this hill is a well. Go there and see you may get to know something about Quraish.

When they reached there they saw some people of Quraish drinking water from the well. There were two slaves among them too. They took them as the slaves of Abu Sufyan and arrested them. Other people were able to escape to safety.

These people who were able to return to their army started shouting and informed the people that Muslims had arrested two people from your army and have taken them along.

This horrified pagans. They were also infuriated by listening to this inauspicious news.

On the other hand the Muslims who had arrested the two slaves started quizzing them about Abu Sufyan believing that the two were his slaves. The two slaves said that they had no knowledge about Abu Sufyan and that they had come to serve water to Quraish army. To know truth they would start beating them. When they said they do not know anything about Abu Sufyan they would start beating them and when they said that they are Abu Sufyan's slaves they would stop beating. The Prophet at that time was offering prayer. When he completed his prayers he said that when they speak truth you start beating them and when thy speak false you stop beating. And then said that they were saying truth. Then the Prophet asked slaves, "tell us something about Abu Sufyan".

"We have not seen him and we don't know anything about him," answered the duo.

"Tell us where Quraish are," the Prophet asked?

"They are not much far from here" the slaves replied.

"How much soldiers are there in their group? The Prophet asked again.

"By God they are in great numbers" the slaves replied.

"How many camels you slaughter daily?" The Prophet asked again.

"Some day nine or ten" they said again.

Then the Prophet saw to his people and said your enemy is between nine hundred and one thousand and further said, "Mekka has thrown its best part towards you".

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The Prophet asked his people as to where it would be better to camp.

Habbab son of Munzir said, "O Prophet! We should first take the water under our control. I know everything about that place. I know a well that never goes dry and its water is very sweet. We can make a pond there and fill water with it. Then we would drink water and would be able to fight. We would also make all the other wells there unusable".

He wanted that they first take the water under their control. It was a probability that if they delay the enemy could take control of the water and they would have to face trouble.

The Prophet liked his suggestion and appreciated it.

The Prophet got up immediately. He was accompanied by his companions. They took control of the water and did as Habbad had advised.

God's mercy was with them. It rained in the night. The ground on their side was sandy. After the rain the ground became firm and it became easy to move freely on the ground. They also made small ponds and took bath and became fresh. On the other hand the enemy was in the downhill. The water logged on their side and it made life miserable for pagans. For Muslims the rain was only mercy and for the enemy it created nothing but trouble.

At that time the Prophet sent Ammar son of Yasir and Abdullah the son of Masood to spy on the enemy. They wandered around the enemy camp, took note of everything and then returned to the Prophet. "The enemy is full of apprehension and fear. It is also raining incessantly" they informed the Prophet.

"A tent should be erected on the high side for the Prophet" suggested Saad. In this manner he would be able to look at the whole battleground. It would also be shadow there and he would be able to take rest if he wished and would be able to offer prayers there too". The Prophet liked the suggestion and so a tent was erected there.

The Prophet then went to the battleground. He was accompanied by some of his best companions. The Prophet named all the important leaders of Quraish and said that where they would be killed. After the battle was over, their bodies were found on the very places indicated by the Prophet.

Then the Prophet came back to his army, arranged his army in queues as an expert. Then he took his troops to the war ground and delivered a speech before them. It was a historical speech and full of vigour and bravery. He said, "Dear brothers. I ask you to do those things that have been ordered by God and try to stop you from those things that the God has prohibited. God is great. He orders to do just and likes truth. He gives upper place to those who do good and these people are remembered for those acts and their honour increase.

Now you have reached the true path. Here only work that is acceptable to God is that work that is done only to please Him. Keep patience here because it is wartime. Patience gives peace at the times of war and it removes fear and trouble. It is also the source of success in the life Hereafter.

Here is also the messenger of God amongst you who warns you against doing evils and orders you to do good. See you should not get involved in any act that could annoy God.

Hold the book God has sent among you with your full force. Take care of His signs. Don't forget the respect you have got after

being in distress. Now God wants to examine you. You give proof of your honesty and sincerity today. God's mercy would keep a shadow over you and His forgiveness would be always with you. His promises are going to realize. His words are nothing but truth and His punishments are exemplary. We are alive only due to Him. He is from always and would remain forever. We have taken Him very strongly and we trust none but Him and He is our refuge. My He forgive you and me and all the Muslims."

Quraish had sent Umair son of Wahab to spy on the Muslims and try to know their numerical strength. He stealthily saw the Muslims and then returned to Quraish. After coming to them he said: "O brothers of Quraish. The troubles bring fear with them. The camels of Madinah are the carriers of death. Listen you are facing an enemy who have grown in the laps of swords. Don't you see they don't speak much and remain silent? Though they don't speak but spite like snakes. By God I believe that everyone who dies in the battleground would die only after killing one among us. Tell me what happiness would remain if so many of our people are killed here? So think over it now."

Quraish did not believe in the words of Umair. So they sent another person to get to know about Muslims. He too stealthily surveyed the Muslim army then returned and told them: "By God they are not too powerful and are numerically weaker than us. They are very far behind in respect of arms than us. But there is one thing different about them. They have come to die and don't want to return their homes. Sword is the only power with them and it is their only refuge. So think over it".

Some people shivered when they listened these words from his mouth. All their resolve started crumbling. They tried to convince others and some people were in fact influenced by them. Then these people returned to Mekka.

When the Quraishi troops came face to face in the battle-ground they were totally immersed in arms. It was a strange scene. Muhammad was praying and crying before God saying, "O God, these are the people of Quraish. Full of power and grandiose, they

have come to fight Thy. They are bent on to oppose Your religion and fail Your Prophet. O God You had assured Your help and assistance. Now please fulfill Your Promise. O God You had asked me to remain firm and had promised a big group. You always fulfill your promises."

He was so unmindful of his surrounding that his bed sheet would fell from his shoulders and he would not even know it. He would prostrate and would beg before God, "O God if these few souls are killed your name would never be worshipped in this world till the end of the world".

On one side was this style of the Prophet. On the other hand God was helping him and trying to encourage him. The Prophet was unaware of the numerical strength of the enemy. In a dream the number of enemy was shown considerably less than they actually were. It proved a moral booster for the Muslim camp. When Muslims heard about them they too felt relieved.

When both the armies came face-to-face Muslims saw them few. Pagans too found them numerically week. So both group took the other numerically small and both were encouraged in this way. But when they actually came to fight on the ground, the enemy felt as if the number of Muslims had grown considerably. But pagans were still looking not as much as actually they were.

Pagans were greatly discouraged by this scene. Fear and humiliation was evident on their faces. It encouraged Muslims considerably and they became bolder in attacking the enemy that was more than three times numerically strong than them. God in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an indicates towards this fact.

"When Allah showed them unto thee (O Muhammad) in thy dream as few in number, and if He had shown them to thee as many, ye (Muslims) would have faltered and would have quarreled over the affair. But Allah saved (you). Lo! He knoweth what is in the breasts (of men).

And when He made you (Muslims), when ye met (them), see them with your eyes as few, and lessened you in their eyes, (it was) that Allah might conclude a thing that must be done. Unto Allah

all things are brought back.

(Surah VIII, 43-44)

Some people of Quraish came forward to drink water from Muslims' water pond. Muslim soldiers tried to scare them away but the Prophet stopped them from doing this and said, whoever from them drinks from here would not be able to get back alive.

Abu Jahl at that time asked Aamir bin Hazrami (whose brother was killed by a Sarya) to come forward saying that the revenge for your brothers' blood is before you. Plead for your brother's revenge". Aamir as per the Arab tradition put off his cloths and came forward crying" Oh Amar. Oh Amar.

The enemies were enflamed by this call for revenge and the war began. Aamir the son of Hazrami came forward first. Mahjaa, the slave of Umar went forward to face him. Mahjaa was martyred. So he was the first martyr in the war of Badr.

Utba then came forward accompanied by his brother Sheba and son Walid. Three youths from Ansar came forward to face the trio. But the Prophet did not like the idea. He thought that it was not good that the Ansar are first sent to fight the enemy in the very first war of Islam and polytheism. He thought that the migrants need to first face the enemy and prove themselves. They were also the people of the same tribe and clan.

So he said, "O sons of Hashim, these people have gathered on the name of falsehood. They want to destroy the light of the truth. Go and give up your life for the truth that your Prophet has brought."

Hamzah, Ali and Ubaidah came forward after listening to the Prophet. Utba asked his son to proceed. Walid came forward. Ali stepped forward and killed him. Then he himself came forward. Hamzah now killed him. Later Shebah came forward and Ubaidah came to face him. He injured him grievously. His foot was cut by Sheba. When Ali and Hamzah saw this scene they went forward and killed Sheba and brought Ubaidah back. (Ubaidah passed away after a few days of War of Badr)

Now the Prophet called his companions saying, "Proceed

towards paradise which is as big as earth and sky."

When Umair the son of Hamam heard this great prediction he became very happy and said, "Is paradise merely as far as they kill me?"

At that time he was eating dates. Now after smelling paradise what interest was left with those dates? He instantly threw them and invaded the queues of pagans. After fighting bravely for a long time he was martyred.

The war was on its full flow when the Prophet took a handful of sand in his hands and threw that at the enemy saying, "destroy your faces, destroy your faces"

It was the hand of the Prophet and the work of God. It created havoc in the camp of the enemy and went in their eyes. They started trying to clear their eyes. Muslims attacked them with renewed zeal and started killing them without making any distinction. Finally the enemy lost heart. Muslims came out victorious. It was the victory of the truth and the defeat of the falsehood.

The war was still continuing when Aswad the son of Abul Aswad who belonged to the Makhzoom tribe said: "By God I would either drink water from Muslims' well or at least make them useless. He hurried towards the pond and was within reach of the pond when Hamzah came and attacked him. He lost a foot but still tried as to what he had resolved. Now he was inside the pond. Hamzah went and killed him.

When the war ended the Prophet asked as to where Abu Jahl was laying. He must be laying somewhere here. Abdullah son of Masood went out to search him and found that he was on the verge of the death. Abdullah cut his throat and brought his head before the Prophet.

Numerous leading lights of pagans were killed in this war. Seventy leaders of Quraish were killed. Muslims took similar number of pagan leaders into their custody.

Fourteen Muslims were martyred. They were six Migrants and eight Ansar. The number of those killed from enemy side was very large and it was difficult to bury them separately. There was a wide

ditch near the battleground, so all their bodies were put inside that ditch and it was flattened.

Then the Prophet called all of them by name and said: "How bad relatives you proved. I have found my God's promise to be true. How many promises of God did you find true? You took me as liar. Others took me as true. You forced me to flee my land. Others sheltered me. You fought me. Others helped me."

The companions said, "O Prophet why you are saying it to those who have died. They don't listen."

The Prophet answered, "They have known now that the promise of God was true. Then he gave attention towards the body of Abu Jahl and said, "You proved to be more arrogant than Pharaoh. When Pharaoh was sure of his death he called God, but when he was sure of his death he was calling Lat and Uzza".

When the war ended Muhammad asked Zaid son of Harthah and Abdullah son of Rawahah to hurry to Madinah and give congratulations for the success of Muslims in the war. It was a great moral booster for Muslims but a very bad news for Jews and Hypocrites.

When the time to divide the booty came, it almost created a rift among Muslims. Some of them started talking in this manner:

Youths, "We deserve booty. It were we who defeated the enemy. We won the day for Muslims by not caring for our life".

Elders, "we rightfully deserve the booty. It were we who stopped the enemy from your backside."

Saad bin Maaz, "Does cavalry has merely as much right as those of weaker people."

Then the Prophet clarified that it is only due to the poor that Allah sends the help.

This discussion was continuing when in the midst of this din came Gabriel. He had brought the answer from the all powerful God

"They ask thee (O Muhammad) of spoils of war. Say: The

spoil of war belong to Allah and the messenger, so keep your duty to Allah, and adjust the matter of your difference, and obey Allah and His messenger, if ye are (true) believers.

(Surah VIII, 1)

Then an announcement was made by the Prophet, "Whoever has killed somebody, he owns the belonging of the person killed by him. Whoever has arrested a warrior will remain under his custody and everything else that was found on the battleground and was got without any struggle belongs to all.

When the order from Allah came and the Prophet made a clear announcement in this regard all the people who were making different claims earlier gave in instantly.

"What should be done to the prisoner?" the Prophet asked his companions.

"They should be killed for not believing in God and their invasion" Umar suggested.

"O Messenger of Allah, they are your own people. God has given you control over them today. But I think they should not be killed and should be released after being made to pay a ransom. It would help in financing future wars. It is also possible that God guides them to the right path and these very people may become your strength in future" Abu Bakr opined.

The Prophet appreciated Abu Bakr's suggestion. The people who were able to pay the ransom were released after the payment of a ransom. The others who were poor and could not pay a ransom but were literate, were asked to teach the children. It was proposed that every one of them would teach ten Muslim children each. And the poor and illiterate ones were released after mere reprimand.

The Prophet returned Madinah as a vanquisher. His heart was full of thanks and gratitude for the Almighty God Who had given him victory over a far superior opponent.

When the humiliating defeat of Mekkans came before the hypocrites and pagans of Mekka they felt defeated. The Jews of Madinah too came to know of Muslims' power. A number of bit-

ter enemies of Islam now embraced Islam. On the other hand people in Mekka mourned and wept for a full month. A number of their women were widowed and several mothers had been left without a son. To mourn their deaths they cut their hair.

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Quraish had lost a large number of their warriors and a great amount of money in the Battle of Badr. But the greatest thing they had lost in the battle of Badr was their pride. Their pride was greatly thrashed in the war and they were really very disturbed over it.

Umair son of Wahb was a bitter enemy of Islam. He and Safwan the son of Umayya were mourning the loss of the battle at Badr. "By God there is no interest left in life after the loss at Badr. The life has become a burden," Safwan said.

"You are true. I am heavily indebted. I am also concerned about the security of my children. Otherwise I would have not returned without killing Muhammad. And to add to my woes my son has been imprisoned by him" says Umair.

You forget about all your debt and be assured about the future security of your children. I take the responsibility of their upbringing" Safwan assured him.

Umair felt secured and after making essential arrangements left for Madinah. A sword was hanging from his neck. He reached the Mosque of the Prophet and entered there to accomplish what he had come for.

He was trying to locate the Prophet when Umar saw him and knew as to what he had in mind. He caught him by his neck and presented him before the Prophet.

"Tell me Umair what has brought you here," Asked the Prophet.

"I have come here to seek the release of my son. Please show mercy and release my son" said Umair.

"Why your sword is shining so much" And what is the use of it here? The Prophet insisted.

"Of what use are these sword? Did they do anything for us at

Badr? When I started out I did not think of it" he replied.

"Umair, tell me the truth. Why have you come here? Don't speak false. There is no advantage in it" said the Prophet.

"I have come here only to seek the release of my son. Believe me I have come for nothing but him" Umair insisted.

"And what were you planning with Safwan in Hajr" the Prophet asked him.

This sentence from the Prophet's lips baffled him. "What was discussed there?" he asked the Prophet in a very feeble sound.

"You had vowed to kill me on the ground that Safwan would pay for your debts and would take care of your children after you. Listen, Allah would not allow it to happen" the Prophet revealed everything.

This disclosure from the Prophet convinced Umair that Muhammad was indeed the true messenger and he embraced Islam saying, "I have no doubt in your being true messenger. I testify that you are the true Prophet".

Now Umair was a Muslim, a believer. The Prophet asked other Muslims to teach him Qur'an and ordered to release his prisoner.

Umair later returned to Mekkan. The people who were waiting to hear the news of the Prophet's murder were greatly disappointed by the news. Umair started convincing others to accept the religion of God and a number of people embraced Islam after being convinced by him.

Opposition Mounts

The defeat at Badr had made the life miserable for Quraish. They had lost the peace of mind and their nights had become sleepless. The truth had won the day for Muslims in the battle of Badr. It made great impact on the image of Muslims and strengthened their position in Arabia. Now they had become a force to reckon with.

For the full one month Quraish mourned the deaths and defeat. But then they stopped mourning. It was not because they had forgotten their deaths and compromised with the fact.

There was nothing of that sort. They were not the sort of people who could forget the death of their leaders and remain silent. Their hearts were aflame since the defeat. But they would not grieve in the open, nor weep in front of people. There was only one thing in their minds now. And that was to take revenge for the blood of their leaders, their near and dear ones and the aim to destroy the people who had given them a resounding defeat.

Women had cut their hair and had prohibited the consumption of perfumes over themselves. They had vowed not to use perfumes, avoid beautifying them till they had taken revenge from the enemy.

Men had vowed not to take rest or sleep peacefully till they settle scores with Muslims. Going a step further Abu Sufyan took oath that he would not take bath till he defeats Muhammad.

So Quraish had stopped mourning and had stopped wailing for their dead. They vowed to fight another war with Muslims and then extinguish the fire of their hearts from Muslims' blood. They were now trying to collect everything needed to fight another war.

They were also making concrete preparations to finance a bloody war.

All goods from the trade caravan that had returned from Syria before the war were kept in Darun Nadva. It was kept intact and it was still not divided among the investors. Now Quraish decided that they would pay back only the original money to the investors. And it was decided that the profit earned over that would be invested to finance the war.

This was the thinking of all the people in Makka so it had already got the consent from all before even formally being presented. The goods were of very good quality, so everything was sold instantly. They were able to earn a considerably large sum as profit. They returned the real amount of investors and the profit was used in war preparations. With full vigour and force they now started preparing for war.

A son of Abu Sufyan was also killed at Badr. Now they had come to know of Muslims' strength. So now they had planned to fight Muslims with a very big army. They also wanted that their army must be deployed with the best arms.

It was not possible to be done instantly and required some time. Baffled as he was, Abu Sufyan could not wait. He took two hundred people with him and started out to take revenge from Muhammad. A few miles before Madinah there was a village named Uraiz. When this group of bandits reached there they saw that an Ansar was tilling his land with the help of a labourer. Abu Sufyan's group killed the two people and set a few houses and date treed on fire. Now he believed that he had kept his words. So he fled the area and ran towards Makka.

When the Prophet came to know about the incident he sent a group to chase the bandits and apprehend them. When Abu sufyan and his group realized the threat from Muslims they started fleeing. At that time to reduce the burden from camels they started throwing away the big bags of parched barley. Parched barley meal is called *suwaiq* in Arabic. So it is known as the war of Suwaiq.

In Madinah there was a big tribe of Jews called Bani Qenqaa.

The area inhabited by them had a big market. They were mostly goldsmiths. It was the only tribe of Jews that used to live inside Madinah city. Other tribes used to live out of Madinah. They were besides others who lived in Khaibar. Muslims were now trying to limit Qenqaa.

The Jews of this tribe were Muslims' allies and had signed an accord after the Prophet's arrival to maintain peace in the city. But now they became jealous after seeing that Muslims' influence was on the rise. They would pretend love and respect for Muslims before them but they had become sworn enemies of Muslims and Islam and were involved in all sorts of conspiracies against Muslims from behind the scene. When Muslims returned from Badr as victorious, the fire of animosity became more intense. They had become extremely jealous of Islam.

They were very amazed as to how Muhammad was able to get so much power within the short span of two years. They were also amazed over how his religion has spread to every house of Madinah. Muslims' increasing influence over other tribes was also a cause of worry for them.

They could never see it. It was an alarm bell for them and a cause of worry. So they came into open and started showing their hostility towards Muslims. They would try to incite pagans of Madinah and other Arab tribes against Muhammad and Muslims.

They threw the accord to the wind and did not respect the agreement of alliance. When the Prophet saw their changed colour he called them for a meeting and delivered a speech. He said: O my Jew brothers. I want to assure you that I am a messenger of God. Please accept Islam. Don't try to seek the same treatment as meted out to the pagans of Quraish at Badr".

The Jews of Bani Qenqa did not consider this warning of any value. They had a sort of superiority complex in their minds. They said, "Muhammad don't be fooled. Those were not experienced soldiers that you feel proud after defeating them. We are the lions of war and we would show you your place if you ever dare to fight us".

It was an open announcement that they had forgotten the agreement between them and the Muslims. It was a great challenge for the nascent Muslim state. Being forced to take a strong stand the Prophet decided to go to war with them. They were shown their place within days. After being surrounded from all the four sides by the Muslims they threw their arms and accepted defeat.

Ordinary Muslims demanded that they should be killed. But they were the allies of the head of hypocrites, Abdullah bin Ubai. He started pleading to let them go easily. He pleaded that they must not be killed and only sent in exile. After seeing his insistence the Prophet asked the tribe to vacate the city within three days.

These Jews fled Madinah. They took their families and wealth along. They went to a place in Syria known as Azraat and settled there. They were seven hundred men. Three hundred of them were fully armed men.

The exile of Bani Qenqa made a great impression on others. The other tribes realized that when such a big tribe can be forced to leave a place it must be due to the power that Muslims wield now. It further strengthened their position in the eyes of others. There were two other tribes of Jews near the Madinah city. Terrified as they were they concluded agreements of peace with Muslims and kept quite.

But there were tribes who thought that if Muslims continued their triumphant advance they would take over the whole of Arab. They thought that Muslims must be shown their place and their moral be diminished. So after thinking in this way they started preparing to attack Madinah.

The Prophet came to know about their dreadful plan. So to take action against them the Prophet came forward. When they heard this news they were terrified. They fled their homes and ran towards deserts. Others took refuge in caves in far off hills.

Quraish were dependent to a large extent on their trade with Syria. And it was simply impossible for them to abandon this lucrative trade. They had to continue in any way. But how should they go to Syria now? Now they could not gather courage to go to Syria

via Madinah as they used to go earlier. They were fearful that Muslims' patrol parties would get to them. So forced to take a new route they started going through Iraq. But that route was not only considerably longer than the one they used earlier but also very porous. Water was also a big problem on this route. Despite all these difficulties they started using it.

But they could not hide this route from Muslims. The Prophet and his companions came to know of the new route they had started using. The Prophet sent a patrol party of hundred armed riders headed by Zaid the son of Haritha to patrol there. It was a time of war and if Muslims don't harm the enemy it could prove detrimental for their very existence.

At a place in Najd called Qirdah this group of Muslim riders caught a caravan. The people who were with the caravan fled in panic and Muslims took control of the caravan and brought the goods to Madinah. The Prophet obviously pleased by it thanked God and distributed this booty among Muslims.

The Prophet had remained totally involved in issues relating to war since his arrival in Madinah. He fought wars for Islam and sacrificed lives and wealth for it. Whenever they got small peaceful intervals, these times too were not without activities. At that time he started a campaign to strengthen bilateral peace, and improvement of mutual relations among Muslims.

He strengthened his relations with the most trusted companions who always flocked around him and were known for their wisdom and bravery. The Prophet would try to strengthen his and his companions' mutual relations. He took several steps to do it.

An important way to strengthen relations was to get involved in formal relationships. He took that step too. He established relations with his companions. Two of his best companions were Abu Bakr and Umar. He married their daughters for this very purpose.

Aaisha was the daughter of Abu Bakr. The Prophet had married her in Makka itself, but as she was very young she was left with her parents. So she came to Madinah with her parents. After coming to Madinah she shifted to Prophet's house.

Hafsah was the daughter of Umar. The Prophet married her to strengthen his bond with Umar.

The Prophet also married his daughters to his companions. He married his youngest daughter Fatima to Ali who was one of his nearest and most trusted companions. Ruqayya, another daughter was married to Uthman, another trusted companion who was always prepared to sacrifice everything for the Prophet. When Muslims went to Badr for the battle she was ill and bedridden. Ruqayya passed away during that period. Uthman could not participate in the battle as he was looking after her. After her death the Prophet married another daughter Umme Kulthoom to him. It was the reason as to why Uthman was called as Zinnurain (Of twin lights).

The Prophet also took great care of the widows. He encouraged his companions to marry those women who get widowed after their husbands' death in wars. He also advised them to take care of the children left behind by those martyrs. He feared that in the absence of any such help such women would become a burden for themselves and their children would add to their woes.

There was a lady Zainab, the daughter of Khuzaimah. She was a very God-fearing lady, spent a lot in the way of God and so was known as Ummul Masakeen (mother of impoverished). She was widowed when her husband was martyred in the battle of Badr. The Prophet married her to set an example for his companions.

The battle at Badr had given a great beating to the enemies of Islam. It had destroyed their image. Could they bear it while they were alive? The Prophet was not unmindful of their tradition. He was sure that the Quraish were not going to sit idle and they would feel at peace only when they have taken revenge of blood with Muslims' blood.

Now Muslims had also apprehended a trade caravan of theirs even after they had changed their route. It renewed the memories of their defeat at Badr. It created a new enthusiasm to take revenge in their hearts. The Prophet was not unaware of these things and

he was sure that he might well have to fight another war very shortly.

The people of Makka were making preparation to take revenge on war footing. Prophet's uncle Abbas had embraced Islam but was still living in Makka. He sent a fast rider to the Prophet in Madinah informing him that Quraish are again going to invade Madinah with a large number of fighters who are very heavily armed. He asked the courier to reach Madinah within three days.

The Prophet was not much amazed when he got the news from Abbas. He was already sure that they would retaliate and with vengeance. But he was amazed at the enormity of their preparation, the number of fighters and the arms they were coming with. He was amazed as to how soon they raised an Army and that too so strong.

The Quraish were preparing for the war day and night. They were assembling arms and recruiting soldiers. They had aligned with several tribes and had signed treaties with others. Poets and powerful speakers were one of the more important weapons to incite people. Poets and fiery speakers of Quraish would go to every tribe and clan, recite poetry and deliver fiery speeches and so they would arouse the youths, the warriors and commoners alike. They would later ask them to participate in the war. In this way they were able to raise a large army and great arms and other essentials.

There were a number of women who had lost their relatives in the battle of Badr. They were very eager to take revenge from Muslims. They were prepared to do anything to bring their people to the battleground to fight another deadly war with Muslims. Hind was more vocal amongst them. Daughter of Utba and wife of Abu Sufyan, she had lost her father, brother and uncle. She had vowed that she would not sit quite and would neither use perfume nor sleep with her husband till she takes revenge for her relatives' death.

When the time of departure of the Army came, she convinced some other women of Quraish to accompany the troops. People asked her not to accompany the army but she forced to take her and other women along. Tuaima son of Adi was uncle of Jubair, the son of Mutim. He had a Negro slave by name Wahshi. He was expert in using a small lance as it was the main weapon used by the

people of Ethiopia. Jubair told Wahshi that he would free him if he kills either Muhammad or Hamzah or Ali. Hind too asked him to eliminate any of the three and assured a large amount of money in return.

Wahshi promised both of them. The troops started towards Madinah. They were three thousand soldiers in all and had two hundred horses and three thousand camels with them. Abu Sufyan was heading this impressive army. The army was being accompanied by fifteen women as well. They would sing songs to provoke soldiers and encourage them to take revenge from their enemies.

There was a man by the name Abu Amir Awsi. He was one of the more respectable people of Madinah and had left the city when the Prophet shifted to Madinah. He was very jealous of Prophet and Islam. He had now aligned with the enemies of Muslims and had shifted to Makka with his cohorts.

He laughed at Muslims and Muhammad and assured the people of Makka that the people of Aus would leave Muhammad the moment they see him. Finally this large army reached Abwa, where the grave of Prophet's mother Amana was. Hind suggested that they vandalize the grave of Prophet's mother. If anyone of us is caught we would pay the ransom together. But others opposed her suggestion and said if they do so all the graves of their relatives would be damaged by tribes of Bani Khazaah and Bani Bakr.

The troops moved forward and reached Atiq where it stopped. This place is only five kilometers from Madinah.

It was the time when the Prophet got the message from Abbas. At that time he was in Quba. Ubai Bin Kaab read out the message to him. The Prophet asked his companions not to disclose anything about it to anyone.

Then the Prophet returned to Madinah and went to the house of Sad the son of Rab. He informed him about the letter and said, be watchful but don't talk about it to anyone. Sad's wife was there and she listened all this. So the news spread in Madinah even before the Prophet was able to talk to his important companions.

It was the third year of Hijrah and fifth day of *Shawwal*, the

tenth month of the Muslims' lunar calendar. The Prophet deputed selfless youths Anas and Munis to spy on the enemy and get full information about it. They came and informed that the Quraish army has arrived to the vicinity of Madinah and their camels and horses have destroyed the standing crops of Madinan Muslims. Their cattle had also destroyed the grazing ground of Madinah. The Prophet then sent Habbab son of Munzir to get concrete information about the troop strength and other relevant information about them. He got back and presented the relevant information about the number of troops and armament with them.

This night was full of fear and apprehension in Madinah. They were facing a determined and cruel enemy that had come with great power to eliminate them. Some brave and determined companions got into battle-gear and patrolled the boundaries of the city for the whole night. Sad the son of Ubadah and Sad the son of Maaz stood guard at the doors of the Prophet's Mosque in their war gear.

When it dawned people came to the Prophet and said, O Messenger of Allah: We should stay inside the city of Madinah and should not do anything with the enemy. If they remain staying there they would repent their decision and if they invade the city we would face them by staying inside the city and kill them by tracking them down. They are not well aware of the streets of Madinah like us.

Abdullah the son of Ubai who was the leaders of the hypocrites also favoured this opinion saying very forcefully, "O Messenger of God! It is a very good opinion. Let them camp outside Madinah. Don't go out. By God whenever we have gone out of the city to face enemy we have incurred heavy losses and whenever the enemy has attacked the city he has lost badly.

O Prophet! Let them stay there. If they stay there they would repent and if enter the city we would surround them and kill them. Our women would also rain stones at them from the rooftops."

There were a number of Muslims who had not participated in the first war, the battle of Badr. They were the people who had embraced Islam later. They used to think of Badr and regretted why they were unable to be there.

There were others who had fought in Badr and had seen as to how small army of Muslims had defeated an army three times greater than them. These two groups were favouring to go out and fight.

A young man stood and said: "O messenger of Allah, come out to fight the enemy. Let them not assume that we have been deterred by them and their powers. Otherwise they would become bolder. O messenger of God! At Badr we were only around three hundred then too God gave us victory. Now we are numerically very strong. We were waiting for this day only."

Another enthusiast got up and pleaded, O messenger of God; Enemies have arrived to our heart and have destroyed our fields. When the time of war would come now?"

Khaisama said, "I did not get the honour to fight in the battle of Badr despite my great efforts. My son fought there and was martyred. I saw him in a dream last night saying, "Father you too should come now. We will be together in the Paradise. I have seen that whatever God had promised was true".

Hamzah was of the same opinion. Pleading to go out he said, "O messenger of God! By God Who has revealed Qur'an upon you I would not eat food till I am able to face the enemy outside the town".

All the new Muslims were full of enthusiasm and were eager to face the enemy in the battleground. They all wanted to be killed in the way of God and not allow Islam to be slightly affected. They all wanted to please their God.

Finally the Prophet announced in this effect. He said that they would go out of the city and fight the enemy. Muhammad then offered Friday prayers and tried to arouse people for Jihad. It was a great speech full of vigour and inspiration. The Prophet said, "If you keep patience the field will be yours".

After the Afternoon prayers the Prophet came to his house. He was accompanied by Abu Bakr and Umar. The two helped him wear the armor. Then the Prophet hung the sword around his neck. Now he was prepared for the war forced upon him and his companions.

Then the Prophet came out. All his companions too were prepared by now and they started out to face the enemy out of the town. There were only two horses in the Muslim army. The Prophet had mounted himself on one of them.

Some youth who had not gained enough age had also come in their enthusiasm to face the enemy with the Muslim army. When the Prophet surveyed his troops he sent all of them back except two. One of them was expert in shooting arrows and the other was very powerful even in comparison to some good fighters. They were Rafe and Samra and were only 15 years old.

The leader of hypocrites, Abdullah the son of Ubai had also come with the army accompanied with his 300 men. He came with the army to a small distance and then returned to Madinah.

Abdullah the son of Amar the son of Haram tried his best to convince him not to return midway to Madinah and tried to remember his pact with the Prophet. But he did not give any heed to it. He on the other hand said, "Muhammad turned down my suggestion and accepted what these young chaps said".

Now Abdullah tried to convince his followers to leave him and stay put with the Muslim army and pleaded with them, " O Brothers! I ask you in the name of God that you please don't leave your Prophet and your brothers when they are to face a bitter enemy".

But they left them and returned saying, "We would have never left you had we been sure that you are going to fight with the enemy. But we don't see it as a probability."

Now the Prophet proceeded with his companions. They were now only 700 Muslims who had to face a three thousand strong army that was full of hatred for them and armed to fullest.

At Uhud, a small hill two kilometers north of Madinah the two armies came face to face. On one side were the faithful slaves of God and on the other side were the rebels and traitors of God.

Both the armies started preparing for the war. The Prophet keeping the Uhud Mountain in the back formed the lines of the

soldiers. He gave the flag in the hands of Musab. There was a small mountain pass in the mountain and there was every probability that the enemy could attack from behind. So the Prophet appointed fifty archers there instructing them not the leave the place in any condition. He said, "Take care of our back. Don't allow them to attack from behind. Don't leave the place in any condition. If we win and go into their lines don't leave the place. If we start being killed then too you don't think of coming to our rescue. What you can it to throw arrow at them because horse fear arrows."

Quraish too lined up their army with great planning. On their right side was kept Khalid the son of Walid and on the left was kept Ikrama. The flag was in the hands of the family of Abduddar and Abu Sufyan was leading the army.

Trying to arouse the flag-bearers Abu Sufyan said, "Flags decide the victory or defeat. So either you fulfill its right or give it to others".

The youth of Abduddar became impatient with vigour and said, "Let the fight begin. Only then you would be able to see our bravery".

The women had successfully played the part they had come for. Hind was in the forefront. They would move between the lines of the army and would incite the soldiers saying, "O youth of Abduddar, go forward, O saviours of the homeland go foraward and use your swords to the fullest."

Then they would recite the following couplets,

"We are the daughters of the stars of skies and we walk on nothing less than the best carpet."

If you fight bravely we would embrace you and if go back we would leave you and would abandon you like your enemies.

Whenever Hind bumped into Wahshi she would remind her promise and would say, " O Abu Dasma cool my heart and get relief for yourself too."

Aamir Ausi came forward with the band of his 150 supporters. He had thought that the people of his tribe would leave the Prophet and his migrant friends so he called them with full force,

"O people of Aus it is I, Abu Aamir".

"The Muslims answered, God blackened your face".

"Aamir said that his people have deteriorated after him".

Both the sides continued throwing stones at one another till Aamir and his people went back.

Then Abu Sufyan came forward and said, "O people of Aus and Khizraj, You go back and let us fight our brothers. We would say nothing to you".

People of the two tribes who were in large numbers with the army cursed him and then the Prophet allowed to strike the enemy. After deputing some of his fighters on the right and the left side he asked the fighters to invade the center of the Quraish army. The loin of Islam Hamzah started his attack in his own style. He roared calling all Muslims to destroy the enemy line. Ali penetrating the center tried to divide the enemy line. The flag of the enemy was in Talha's hand. He came forward to attack Ali. Ali attacked him like blaze-flash and lo! he was on the ground. Now the flag was in his brother Uthman's hands. Hamzah came forward and attacked the hand in which he had kept the flag. The hand was cut but Uthman took the flag in his other hand. Hamzah attacked the other hand and cut it too. Now the flag was taken by Abu Saeed. He was their brother. Sad the son of Abi Waqqas who later became famous for the successful assault on Persia, killed him by using his arrow. So the flag remained hovering between Talha and his brothers. Later it were his sons Musafe and Jullas who tried to protect the flag by selflessly defending it. Asim the son of Abu Aflah, a well-known archer, grievously injured the two brothers by his arrows.

Their mother, Sulafa, had come with the other fourteen women to participate in the war. When she heard the news of their being injured, she immediately reached the spot and took both of them in her lap. Both were taking their last breaths when she asked as to who had killed them?

The sons said that while we were hit by the arrows we heard exclaim, "It is me, the son of Abu Aflah".

Sulafa vowed that if she were able to get the skull of Abu Aflah she would drink wine in it and would give 100 camels as

reward to his killer.

The Prophet took his sword in his hand and said, "Who is there to give it its right?"

A number of brave men from among the Muslims came forward to get the honour to use the sword. Abu Dujana Ansari who was a well-known wrestler of the Arab was one of them. He asked, "O Prophet what is its right?"

"It should be used against enemy till its sharpness remains" replied the Prophet.

Abu Dujana took the sword in his hands. A great warrior as he was, he tied a red handkerchief on his head. It was a sign for people who knew him that he was now ready to fight decisively, even to death. He tied it on his head and started walking with great pride between the two armies. It was not a new thing. He was known to walk in this way during wars. When the Prophet saw him walking in this manner he commented, "This style of walking is not liked by God. But now it is His favourite style".

Abu Dujana entered the lines of the enemy with his red hanky tied round his head. He would kill any pagan who would come in his way. He saw someone who was trying to incite the enemy soldiers. He lifted his sword to kill the person. But the person cried. When Abu Dujana saw he found that it was Hind the daughter of Utba. Abu Dujana stopped his sword in the mid air as he thought that killing a woman by this sword would disgrace his sword. Killing women was also strictly prohibited by the Prophet.

The fighting was on its height. Muslims were fighting with unprecedented courage with an opponent that was four times larger than they and hundred times better equipped. They were moving forward and were killing their enemy with great zeal. Their archers were using their arrows with great effect.

Hamzah was fighting in his own style. He held swords in both his hands. The queues would be destroyed wherever he would go. Wahshi was awaiting to get a good opportunity to kill Hamzah so to get freedom from slavery and reward from Hindah.

The time he was waiting for since the fighting started came. Hamzah was attacking an enemy when Wahshi tried to attack

Hamzah. He threw the spear at him at the first opportunity. It struck at his navel and came out from behind. Hamzah tried to see as to who attacked him and then tried to hurry towards him to kill Wahshi but he was injured very grievously and was taking his last breaths. When he saw that the pulse had stopped he went forward, took out his spear and went to a side and sat there as he had done his job.

Though Hamzah had martyred but the enemy was getting into defensive gear. Muslims were dominating the battlefield. The flag of Quraish was in the hands of Abdaddar family. Someone from them would take it when any member of their family would fell down and take control of the flag. Finally all of them were killed and the flag was now on the ground. The fall of the flag made a decisively negative impact on the enemy psych. Now they started fleeing the filed. Muslims were chasing them. Their women who till hours ago were trying to incite them were now trying to hide somewhere.

Muslims, now, taking the victory for granted started collecting booty. When the archers saw that their people had almost won the day and that they are now entering the tents of the enemy and collecting the booty they said "why are we here now? See our people who are collecting the booty. We should also go there."

Others tried to remind them as to what the Prophet had ordered them. They reminded that he had said "Save us from our backside".

Abdullah the son of Jubair tried his best to stop them but they left their place and went to join other Muslims in collecting the booty. Merely a handful of archers were still there trying to deter the enemy. Probably they were 10 archers who kept the word and stood on guard.

Unfortunately Khalid the son of Walid saw this side. He saw that the pass in the mountain was without guards and there were merely a few archers. He took a posse of riders with him and attacked them with full might. The left wing of their army being led by Ikrima also came there and joined the assault from backside.

Abdullah the son of Jubair retaliated with great courage and fought with rest of his group till their death. Finally all of them were martyred.

Now the way of the enemy was clear. It proceeded towards the place where Muslims were involved in collecting the booty and the other pagans were fleeing. These riders after reaching there roared, Greatness be for Uzza, Greatness be for Hubl.

Now the swords were on Muslim heads. They were collecting booty without any fear. When they saw this sudden attack from their back they lost courage. But still they took out their swords and again started fighting an enemy that had gained dominance over the battlefield. The enemy surrounded Muslims from all the four sides and was now trying to encircle them further.

Muslims were terrified. They had lost the recognition between their men and the enemy. In confusion they were killing their own people. The worst thing was that they had forgotten the sign by which they were recognizing their people. The pagans had become in a dominant position.

It was in the midst of this confusion that a pagan cried and claimed that (God forbid) Muhammad has been killed!!

This misinformation spread in the battleground as a wildfire. Muslims lost any courage whatsoever left. On the other hand enemy was further encouraged.

Even the great warriors of Muslims were now losing hope. A number of people had thrown their arms and had stood in a corner. They were also giving the same advice to others as they thought it was of no use to continue fighting any further.

But there were still some people who had not lost courage and were fighting with great courage and were trying to encourage others to continue the fight.

They would say, "The Prophet has completed his responsibility. He brought to you the message of God. Now you should guard his religion and fight for it. God is alive and He would never die."

But generally speaking there was no resemblance of order left in their lines. People were standing where they were and the enemy

was trying to concentrate its attack on the side where Prophet was. The way was clear. A group of enemy now decided that it was time to kill him and proceeded towards him. They started throwing stones and arrows incessantly towards him.

The Prophet was also using arrows with great effect. The Prophet threw so many arrows that his bow broke into two pieces. There were a few diehard companions around him who were trying to protect him from enemies fearlessly.

Sad the son of Abi Waqqas a famous archer was also with him. He was shooting arrows incessantly. It is said that on that single day he threw some one thousand arrows. The Prophet would himself give arrows to him and would say, "I sacrifice my parents on you. Shoot the arrows."

Talha was another famous archer. He was also there protecting the Prophet. He shoot so many arrows that two arrows broke in his hands.

Abu Dujana bowed in front of the Prophet in order to protect him and became a shield for the Prophet. He would take any arrow coming in Prophet's direction on his back. Talha was trying to protect the Prophet from swords by using his hands. His one hand was cut and fell on the ground but he did not look at that.

In the meanwhile a bigot came forward and attacked the Prophet on his face with his sword. The sword broke two rings of the head shield protecting the head. Two rings got tangled with the face. Another misfortunate threw a stone that struck his face and broke his two front teeth. His lips were also injured.

On one side the pagans were doing it to the Prophet and on the other side he was trying to plead mercy of God for them in these words, "O God forgive them for, they know not".

The Prophet was in great danger and Muslims were convinced that he was martyred and the enemy was extremely happy over this news that finally they have fulfilled their long cherished dream. The truth was that Musab the son of Umair was martyred. The enemy who had killed him was Ibne Qumayya.

Musab greatly resembled Prophet in his appearance. His killer took advantage of it and rumoured that he had killed the Prophet.

The companions who were with the Prophet tried to deny the news. But Prophet asked them to remain silent. And the enemy was sure that he is done to death.

The people of Quraish had spread everywhere and were searching his body. Everyone of them wanted to get it first to cut it into pieces. Abu Sufyan was also among the people who were searching him. He would run towards every dead body and then feel hopeless and ask to himself as to where was Muhammad's body. Why it is not seen here.

He was in this midst searching for his body when he saw the body of Hamzah. He lost his temper and started using his spear at his body in rage. He would use it on his body and said, "O traitor now get the result of what you did at Badr".

An infidel who was standing nearby seeing the treatment Abu Sufyan was giving to Hamzah's body could not bear it. He pulled Abu Sufyan towards him and cried, "O people of Quraish, see what he is doing with his dead brother". It brought Abu Sufyan to his senses. He pleaded with him that he was mistaken and that he should not tell anyone about him.

Abu Sufyan after sometime bumped into Khalid. Abu Sufyan asked him impatiently as to where Muhammad's body was?

"It is merely a rumor spread by someone. I just saw him climbing on the mountainside" Khalid replied.

Muslims in general were by now sure that the Prophet had been martyred. But still they were trying to search him. It was the time when Kaab the son of Malik saw him. Though it was a head shield on his face but he recognized him by his eyes. He cried in joy and said, "O Muslims this is the messenger of Allah. O Believers the messenger of God is alive".

It was a sound that sparked a new life in the lifeless spirit of Muslims who had almost given up on him. It instantly brought life back to them. They regained their lost courage and appetite to fight to death. Now they were trying to keep him in a ring. Umar and Abu Bakr were in the forefront. The condition was getting more and more severe and the danger was increasing. His fearless companions made a protective wall around him and started climbing on

the mountain, as it was not easy for the enemy to reach there.

Abu Aamir Ausi had dug some trenches in the hills so that Muslims fell in them. When the Prophet was passing through one such trench he almost fell in one of them but Ali and Abu Talha took his hands and brought him to the hill.

Abu Sufyan had seen the Prophet climbing the mountainside. He too started chasing them. But Umar and some other companions saw him and they started throwing stones at them and they failed in reaching there.

The false news of the Prophet's death reached Madinah as well. It created a havoc there. When Fatima heard this news she became inconsolable and ran towards the battleground. She anyhow reached his father. But when she saw that the blood was streaming out of his face she started weeping. Ali brought water and Fatima started cleaning his wound. She washed it several times but blood would not stop. Finally they burned a piece of mat and then put its ash on the wound. Only then the blood stopped.

Ubai the son of Khalaf was a bitter enemy of the Prophet. When he heard that the Prophet was still alive, he became furious. He took his sword in his hands and with some of his cohorts ran towards the Prophet. When he reached near him, the Prophet took a spear from one of his companions and pricked it slightly in his throat. He felt as if he was set afire. He ran backward crying and then died with great pain.

Seventy believers were martyred in this war. Martyred included some of the best Muslim warriors. Hamzah was one amongst them. Wahshi was the happiest man on that day. He reached Hind and asked for his reward. I would give you my most expensive necklace but only tell me where is he?

When she saw the body of Hamzah she lost her senses. She opened the chest of Hamzah and brought out kidney and started chewing it to cool her heart. But she could not chew it and had to throw it out. She then took out her necklace and gave it to Wahshi. Then she took some other pagan women with her and cut bodies of Muslim martyrs and wore them as necklace.

When the enemy buried their dead Abu Sufyan came running near the mountainside and cried, "O Muslims it is the revenge for the last year's war at Badr. We will again fight at Badr the coming year."

Then he said the following words and returned, "The people of my army have cut the nose and ears of your dead people. I did not order it nor I tried to stop them. I did not feel happy by it nor I felt any pain for it"

Later Muslims came down from the hillside to bury their martyrs . When the Prophet saw the body of Hamzah he saw his body parts were scattered all around. His eyes became full with tears. Tears started rolling down his eyes and his beard became wet with it. At that time people heard these words from his lips that were full of sorrow and pain, "My eyes never saw such painful scene".

Then he said, "Had Safiya not felt pained and had I not feared that it would become a custom I would have left his body to be eaten by crows and other ravenous animals. By God if I have ever control over them I would do the same with thirty of their people.

But instantly the following verse came to his mind:

"If ye punish, then punish with the like of that wherewith ye were afflicted. But if ye endure patiently, verily it is better for the patient.

Endure thou patiently (O Muhammad). Thine endurance is only by (the help of) Allah. Grieve not for them, and be not in distress because of that which they devise.

Lo! Allah is with those who keep their duty unto Him and those who were doers of Good."

(Sura XVI, 126-128)

Continued aggression against Muslims

"Think not of those, who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision.

Jubilant (are they) because of that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty, rejoicing for the sake of those who have not joined them but are left behind: that there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve."

(Sura III,169-170)

It was a very tough day for Muhammad at Uhud. When the fighting stopped bodies of his companions were full of grievous injuries. But they were more pained not because of their injuries but because they had failed to destroy the enemy. They had not been able to keep their promises that they would completely destroy the enemies of God.

They were also pained by the martyrdom of seventy of their people. The Prophet himself had shot innumerable arrows. Sad had shot around 1000 arrows alone. Talha had also shot a large number of arrows.

Besides other warriors like Abu Bakr, Umar, Hamzah, Musab bin Umair, Sad bin Abi Rabi, Anas bin Nasr, Abu Dujana, Abdullah bin Jubair, Hanzalah bin Amir, Abu Sufyan bin Harith and several other companions had fought with unprecedented bravery.

So it is sure that the enemy lost a large number of people in the battlefield.

But despite all their losses the pagans had taken an upper hand

in the end. Their war tactics had destroyed the spirit of the Muslim army. And they were successfully able to change the course mid-way.

The rumour they spread about the martyrdom of the Prophet also destroyed the zeal of fighting among Muslims. They lost courage and hope and then the enemy was successful in reaching to the Prophet and in its effort to injure him.

It was a terrible thought for the brave and selfless companions of the Prophet who were ever ready to give up their lives that despite their presence the Prophet got injured.

It was as if the all the troubles had invaded Muslims in one go. They were mourning the death of their seventy fighters, the injury of Prophet and their own injuries and then the greatest sorrow of not being able to completely demolish the flag-bearers of *kufr*.

These thoughts had almost destroyed the spirit of Muslims. Their faces were reflective of how they felt inside their hearts.

So the Prophet thought it necessary to do something that restores their spirit and bring back their pride. He also perceived that this thought of losing the battle is removed from their minds and give them a thought of victory. So the Prophet in order to create this feeling among dispirited Muslim army thought of chasing the enemy. He thought if they get them they would do the needful to destroy the enemy completely and if they leave the field, it would itself prove as to who is winner and who is the loser.

So Muhammad called his companions and said that they have to chase the enemy. He made it clear that only those people will go with the army who had participated in the battle of Uhud.

Abu Sufyan and his people had left the battlefield in a hurry. They left the field even before the Muslim army.

When he had come long way from there and thought it safe to take rest for a while and then proceed to Mecca he came to know that Muhammad was coming behind chasing him. And that they were to completely destroy the Quraish army.

It took Abu Sufyan by surprise. He could not gather spirit to fight again fearing that they might lose badly if they fight them

again.

The Prophet chased the Meccan army till Hamaraul Asad, some eight miles away from Medina. Muslims camped there for three days. These three days were spent in a way that the companions would collect firewood the whole day and then burn them in the night. Every companion would light up his own firewood. For three successive nights there were five hundred fires visible from a long distance. When the Quraish army did not gather courage to fight again with the Muslims and left the place the news spread all over Arabia. Everyone was saying that Quraish left the place without giving a fight.

Muslims spirits were raised and the thought of losing the battle from their mind was erased. It was replaced with a sense of victory after chasing the enemy for eight miles.

That was the farsightedness of the Prophet and his wisdom. He gathered enough courage when he himself was badly injured to encourage his dispirited flock to chase an enemy who had inflicted great losses over them on that very same day.

After the battle of Uhud Muslims faced a number of challenges from several tribes. A number of tribes ditched the Prophet and threw their accords to the wind. Several small battles were fought with these tribes. Muslims though won most of these small battles; but losses were inflicted on them too.

The most important of these battles was that of exiling the tribes of Banu Nazir. It was a tribes of Jews and it had signed an agreement of peace with Muslims. They not only ditched the accord but tried to kill the Prophet. When the Prophet went to them to talk on their effort to break the agreement, they sent some people to kill him by throwing a stone from a rooftop. He was told about the threat in a revelation and the Prophet returned from there. Later the Prophet ordered them to leave Medina. But as they were full of pride they refused to comply with the order. Muslims surrounded them from the four sides. Later they gave up. Most of their people later settled in Khaibar some hundred miles from Medina. A number of others went to Syria. Despite the fact that

they had been exiled from the city, they started spewing venom against him and tried to unite the anti-Muslim tribes on a single platform.

The Quraish had challenged to fight another war with Muslims at Badr. Now the time they had talked about had come. But they were unable to gather courage to go there and fight Muslims. They were feeling let down and were now repenting as to why they claimed to do it. It was a cause of worry for them, as it would destroy their reputation in Arabia. They tried to resort to misinformation. They started spreading news that Quraish were coming with a great number of warriors. They sent their people who would talk of the great army the Quraish would be coming with the aim to demolish Muslims' moral.

But Muhammad was not one of them who could be deterred by these tactics. He kept his word and when the appointed day came he headed towards Badr with his companions. It was a time when a big yearly market was organized there. The companions had taken some goods for trade. When they reached Badr, there was no sign of Quraish or their army. Muslims waited for them to come.

It was a question of their honour and reputation. They had to keep words. But as they were sure of losing the battle they were not bale to gather enough courage to go there and challenge Muslims once again.

Anyhow they gathered some courage and Abu Sufyan led his troops towards Badr. They had not traveled more than two days when they felt so much fearful that they talked of return. Abu Sufyan said, "Brothers, it is a year of drought. Wars and battles are pleasures of prosperity. It would be wise if we return to Mecca" saying these words he turned his back and left for Mecca. When his people saw that their commander was turning his back they too left for Mecca. And so the whole army returned to Mecca.

The Prophet and his companions waited for the enemy for full eight days at Badr. It was also a yearly market there so they traded too. God gave them good returns. But even after eight days there

was no sign of enemy anywhere.

Then the Prophet returned to Medina with his people. They would talk of Pagans' cowardice and spinelessness and would remember God's gifts to them and His benevolence over them. They would thank Him for His great generosity for them.

By now the Quraish were awed by Muslims' power and had come to understand that it would be a self-destructive act if they fight them again. But the recently exiled tribe of Banu Nazir were jealous of the Prophet and his companions. They were unable to come to terms with their forced exile from Medina.

Its leaders including Huyai son of Akhtab and Salam son of Abil Haqaiq went to the leaders of Quraish and tried to arouse them. They tried to convince them that they should fight Muslims once again and destroy their power.

Then they would say, "Why to fear? We are there to fight with you. We would not take rest till we kill Muhammad. And we have come to take vows with you to eliminate Muhammad."

These words from Jews created a new wave among the people of Quraish. It renewed their hopes to see Muhammad defeated and his religion eliminated. They welcomed Jews and said with great happiness! "You have come at the right time. We love those people who are behind Muhammad to kill him".

The Quraish then asked those people as they were the people of the Book, "Brothers you already have a book from God. You are not unaware of our differences with Muhammad. Tell us if his religion is truth or ours".

Jews in their bid to convince them said, God forbid, how can his religion be compared with yours. Your religion is true while his' is only a bundle of lies".

The Jews tried to arouse them in this manner. They would give them false assurance and try to create hope among them. Quraish in their zeal to destroy Muslims were fooled. They vowed to destroy Muhammad and his religion till their last breaths.

Now it was decided that they would go to war and the time was also fixed for the purpose. Jews were not satisfied by merely inciting the Quraish. They went to a number of tribes of Arabs and created confusion there regarding Muhammad and Islam. They went to the Ghatfan, a powerful tribe of the region and tried to lure them by assuring them that they would pay half of the yearly harvest of Khaibar if they helped them now. They resorted to similar tactics in other tribes as well. They went to Bani Sulaim, Bani Asad, Bani Fuzarah, Bani Ashjaa and Bani Murrah and tried to frighten them from Islam. They said that it was a danger that would envelop all of them in it if they did not act. They aroused them to protect their religion and also allured them by promising great wealth.

Now the whole of Arabia was united against the Prophet. Irrespective of their religious affiliation they were brought onto a single platform in their bid to destroy Islam. They had vowed to destroy Islam for once and for all.

It was an ocean of fully armed men. They were ten thousand in all.

The Prophet was not in the dark about these moves of the pagans and the tactics of the Jews. He knew that the whole Arab was coming like a hurricane to destroy Medina and eliminate Islam and Muslims.

How would Muslims fight such a large army that had the support of the whole of Arab" How would they defend them and how would they be able to stop this cyclone?

The Prophet gathered his companions and sought their counsel. They were unanimous that they should not go out of the city to fight this army and should defend the city from inside.

Salman a devoted companion of the prophet was an Iranian by birth and he was aware of the war tactics resorted by them. He said, "It is not without danger to go in the open and fight such a large enemy. Instead the Muslim army should assemble at a place and dig trenches where from the enemy could try to enter the city".

Muhammad was obviously pleased by this suggestion. He at

once mounted on a horse, took a few companions along and went to inspect the geographical location of Medina. They decided as to where they had to dig trenches and ordered to start work immediately.

Muslims got to the work immediately. They quickly arranged for spade, shovels and other essential items needed in digging trenches. Jews of Bani Quraiza tribe were the allies of Muslims. A number of these items were brought from them.

Medina was surrounded on three sides from impregnable mountains and inaccessibly barren lands. It was accessible only through the northern side. It was decided that they would dig the trench only in this side. Muhammad himself had prepared the schedule and plan for digging trenches. So twenty meter land was given to a group of ten people each for digging.

Muhammad too was digging trenches along with his companions. The company of the Prophet created an unprecedented zeal in his people. They would forget their tiredness when they would see that the Prophet was digging the land along with them.

The nights were icy cold. Muslims were digging without eating anything for the last three days. But they were digging without thinking of that. They would dig and then carry the clay on their heads to throw it near the Sala hill. From there they would bring back stones thinking that they would resort to use them in case the need arose.

Three thousand fortunate men were digging trenches day and night. They were so full of enthusiasm that they would not think of their being tired or hungry. Within nine or ten days they had done the impossible. The trench was complete. It was six thousand meter long, five meter wide and 5.4 meter deep. Now Medina was safe.

There is a hill near Medina called the hill of Sala. There was a big field between the trench and this hill. Muhammad camped his army in this field keeping the hill on his back.

Even the children of Medina were enthused to fight the enemy. When the army started marching, the young children too

started moving with the army. When the troops reached the field and Prophet surveyed his troops he asked the children of less than fifteen years of age to go back to their houses.

It was Shawwal, the tenth month of the fifth Hijrah year. The front rows of the army was visible to the people of Medina. Abu Sufyan had hoped that he would see Muslim army at Uhud. When he did not find it there he proceeded to Medina. He camped at Medina. Ghatfan and some other tribes camped near Uhud.

When the enemy sent patrols to gather information about Muslim army they were amazed to find the trenches before Medina. They had never thought of it even in their wildest dreams. They were shocked to see it. They had never seen it before. Later they realized that Muslims had dug trenches to stop their army's march into Medina. The thought that instantly came to their mind was, "Would we not be able to cross it? Would we fail again to accomplish for what we have done so much? Would Muhammad again survive?"

When these patrols returned to their army they informed their bosses as to what they had seen. Everyone was amazed after hearing it. It was an absolutely new thing and it was never resorted to in Arab.

Muslims knew that the enemy has finally arrived. So they strengthened their positions and increased patrols. A tent was erected in the side of Salaa hill. The Prophet came there and planned as to how he was to fight this war.

The Muslim army consisted of three thousand soldiers. Muhammad divided it into several groups. He deputed some of these groups to guard the trench. He gave special emphasis where there was any probability of enemy crossing it. The main army was then lined up propfessionally. They were aiming the enemy with bows and arrows in their hands.

Now the two armies were facing each other. Quraish made numerous attempts to cross the trench but failed. Muslim archers were shooting arrows like rains. Seeing the ferocity of rains of arrows they pulled their troops backward. When it dawned the next

morning they again tried to cross the trench but were failed in their effort. Now they were both angry and depressed. They were now almost sure that they are going to lose this war as well. It was extremely cold and freezing winds were making their condition more miserable. So they were becoming more desperate.

This repeated failure and the tough weather depressed the whole army. Everyone was asking as to how they could control Muhammad now?

When Huyai bin Akhtab saw this miserable condition he became fearful. He thought that he would have to do something to renew the hope and enthusiasm of the army. He came running to Abu Sufyan and said, "You know the bravery of Banu Quraiza who are of my religion. You know their power".

Abdu Sufyan asked him to not delay in seeing them and demanded them that they revoke the treaty with Muslims.

Huyai bin Akhtab hurried towards them to provoke them and ask them to ditch Muslims. The head of the tribe guessed as to what the matter was so he closed the gates of his fort and refused to see Huyai. Huyai tried to incite him by repeatedly swearing in God's name. He then tried to provoke him by saing, "I know as to why you are refusing to open the gates. You fear that I will start eating from your plate".

This provoked Kab bin Asad and he asked the door be opened.

Huyai said, "See how much respect I have brought for you. How big an army I have gathered here from all over Arab! It is like an ocean. Every one is part of this army from Quraish to Ghatfan. They have come to destroy Muhammad and Muslims. They all are eager for the blood of Muhammad. They have vowed that they would not leave the place without killing Muhammad".

"By God you want to disgrace me. I have entered in a treaty with Muhammad and I cannot dishonour the treaty. Muhammad has always been faithful to me". Kaab replied without giving any importance to Huyai's plea.

Huyai did not give up. He continued provoking Kab. He said,

"Today the honour of our whole army is in your hands. Its honour and disgrace, both are in your hands. Now you are free to think".

It is not the time to let go this opportunity. You revoke the treaty and allow our army to use it. Our army would come like a storm and destroy Muhammad and his army within minutes. Then we would be honourable people of Arab. Everyone would respect us. It would also open the gate of spreading our religion as well and we would be the masters of all wealth of Medina.

These words did the magic for Huyai. Kab was now prepared to ditch the Muslims. He was still in two minds and was thinking that what could happen to him if Muslims beat the army? He was thinking that after their defeat Quraish would flee the place and he would be left alone to get the punishment. I would also be disgraced like the two tribes of Banu Nazir and Bani Qenqaa.

"Huyai understood as to what was in his mind so he said again to reassure him, "God forbid even if we are losers we would come here to stay with you and face the might of Muhammad collectively". Now Kab was prepared to ditch Muhammad and Muslims.

Huyai returned to his army full of happiness and he gave the good news of Banu Quraiza's decision to ditch Muhammad. He was sure that the field was in his hands and Muhamamd's defeat would take only that much time that was required for Banu Quraiza to prepare them.

The news of Banu Quraiza's trechery spread in moments. It fell like a thunderbolt over them. It was a dangerous signal for them. Now it meant that not only their army was in danger but even city was in very much danger. There was not any way left to procure supplies for the army. The threat from enemy had increased manifolds because they had now got a way to enter it.

To confirm the Prophet sent Zubair the son of Awwam. When he reached there he found Bani Quraiza a changed people. Then the Prophet deputed Usaid bin Huzair, Sad bin Ubada and sad bin Maaz to talk to the head of the Jew tribe. Sad bin Ubada was the head of Khizraj tribe and Sad bin Maaz was the head of Aus. Both were allies of this Jew tribe as well. The Prophet had asked them

to inform of their treachery in codes if the news was true and announce publicly if it was only a rumour.

When they reached there they saw that much water had flown down the drains and they had decided to ditch Muslims. The head of the clan was talking in worst language. He was repeatedly taking the name of the Prophet with disrespect. He went to the extent of saying that "he did not know who the prophet was. And that we know only Muhammad and that they had never allied with Muhammad."

The companions became furious when they saw talking them in this language. It looked as if the fight would begin there but Sad bin Maaz tried to control the situation saying, "what is it? Our relations have touch nadir with them".

Then these companions returned to the Prophet and as per his order told him about their treachery in codes. But it was not a news that could remain a secret. It spread like a wildfire. The whole Muslim army came to know of it within hours. They felt hopeless and thought as if the war was already over. Everyone was saying, "This trench is of no use now. They would now attack from the fort of banu Quraiza".

The besieging had become tougher. Several days passed in this tough condition. Muslims were starving for days now. They had started complaining. The Prophet feared that they might give up if besieging remain so intense for any longer. Then the Prophet sent a man to Ghatfan with the message that if you go back without fighting we would give one third of our annual crop to you. Ghatfan showed there preparedness to go back but they were demanding half of the crop. To conclude the talks they sent their men and demanded half of the harvest. Abu Sufyan was absolutely unaware of it.

The Prophet called Sad bin Muaz and Sad bin Ubadah and sought their counsel in this regard. Sad bin Muaz said, "O Messenger of God! If it is an order from God then there is nothing to oppose it. If it is your decision than too we accept it. But if it is merely a thought in your mind then please allow me to tell

something".

"O Sad, I am doing it for you people. I thought that if we do it the pressure of enemy would reduce considerably", the Prophet said with great love.

"O Messenger of God! When we worshipped idol even at that time no one could take anything from us. Now when we have been graced by your presence among us and our status has increased, we have only swords to answer them" Sad opened his heart before the prophet.

When the Prophet saw the courage shown by Sad he felt satisfied. He gave up the thought of going into any treaty with Ghatfan and sent back their people.

Nuaim bin Masood was a leader of Ghatfan. He had embraced Islam but had not informed his people about it. One night he surreptitiously came to the prophet and gave the news of his Islam. He said, "O Prophet no one knows about my embracing Islam so far. You can ask me to do anything for you."

"Nuaim, you are the one of its kind for us. You should create rift among them in any way possible so we could be saved from them" answered the Prophet.

Nuaim returned from there immedialtely and started thinking as to what to do to defeat them in their unholy intentions.

The enemy now was fighting with a renewed zeal. They had now forgotten everything about the cold or the ferocity of the weather. They were not even caring for the trench as they were sure that banu Quraiza were with them. They had thought that Muhammad's end was inevitable.

The foot soldiers were divided into three groups and had besieged the Muslim army from all the sides so they could move nowhere. The cavalry was moving everywhere shooting arrows at Muslims without slightest mercy.

Muslims were now terrified. They were now in full siege. The fear of Jews was extra. They had become more concerned about the safety of their women and children who were now trapped inside a fort in the city. It was probable that Bnu Quraiza could

attack them. So the Prophet sent some people to guard the city against this threat.

When the Jews ditched Muslims they also started spying on Muslims. They wanted to know the weak points of Muslim army so they would not face much trouble when they attack them later. A patrol party of Jews came out for this very purpose. But Muslims saw them and chased them.

The fort where women and children were kept was in the vicinity of Banu Quraiza. The Jews thought it an opportune time to attack the fort. A jew came in the vicinity of the fort to gather information about it. Safya, an aunt of the Prophet was also there inside the fort. She saw the enemy and asked Hassan bin Sabit, the famous poet who was deputed there for the safety of the fort; to go and kill the enemy. She said, Go and kill the enemy immediately. Otherwise he would go back and give information about us to the enemy. Our men are fighting in the filed and they would not be able to come to our rescue. If he goes back safely then we would be in great trouble".

Hassan could not gather courage and said, "O daughter of Abdul Muttalib, You know I am not made for that."

There was no other way. So safiya herself took out a bamboo from her tent, went stealthily out and killed the enemy by the bamboo".

She got back to Hassan and said, "He is a man so I did not think it appropriate to take out arms from his body. Go and get his arms".

Hassan apologized to her saying that he could not do it either and said "O daughter of Abdul Muttalib let it be on his body. I don't need arms."

"Then go and cut his head and throw it across the field so they start thinking that the army is in the fort" Safiya insisted.

Hassan was not prepared to do this either. So Safiya who was very concerned about the safety of women very courageously went there, cut his head and threw it in the field out of the fort. When the Jews saw the head of their man they thought that there is some

army of Muslims in the fort and so they lost the courage to attack it as they were planning.

Days were becoming tougher for Muslims. They were now being forced to starve without any food supply from out of the city. It was also becoming increasingly dangerous to go to bed even in nights. Their lives were constantly under threat.

And to add to their woes there were hypocrites among the Muslims too. They were exposed during these tough days. They would come to the Prophet and ask for his permission to go to their homes on the pretext that their homes were not safe and their children were in danger.

They were also trying to discourage and weaken their moral. They would say that they were in danger and would try to annoy them from the Prophet. They would laugh at him saying "he claims that you would get the treasures of Bazantine and Sassanese empires and here are we not even getting the food and we are in danger to go out and get it."

Several days had passed since the treachery of Banu Quraiza became known. The enemy troops were waiting impatiently to provide them passage from inside their fort to reach Medina city. But they had to do something. So they would either throw stones or shoot arrows at Muslims.

At one place the width of the trench was smaller. There was no guard at that place as well. The enemy thought it a godsend and tried to attack from that route. They came forward with their full strength. Among them were well known warriors of Arab including Ikrima, Zurar and Amar the son of Abdewud, who was thought to be worth one thousand riders. He was the first to cross the trench. He came forward and said "Is there anyone who could come to fight me?" Ali came forward saying, "Yes here I am." The Prophet warned Ali saying "Do you know it is Amar". Ali replied saying "Yes I recognize him fully". Then the Prophet gave him sword by his own hand and tied turban around his head. Then he prayed for him saying, "O God please help Ali". Now Ali was in front of Amar prepared to fight him. When Amar saw Ali he said,

" O my nephew I don't want to kill you'. Ali replied him saying but my sword is impatient to kill you".

Now Amar was red with anger. He with his full might attacked Ali. Ali after stopping his attack retaliated by moving forward. The people who were there saw Amar laying on the ground and blood streaming out of his body like a spring. Muslims who were overjoyed by Ali's splendid job cried "Greatness be to God". Amar's cohorts who had crossed into the trench with him fought for sometime and then returned on their back foot.

Tough the enemies lost a great warrior from among their ranks they were also happy for being able to cross the trench. Several others were encouraged to do the same and fight Muslims after crossing it. A group of enemy soldiers came forward trying to cross the trench. The sun had already set and it was getting dark. Naufal, a good soldier was leading his group. When he tried to jump his horse across the trench it fell in the trench and died instantly. After seeing this end of Naufal others could not gather courage to try any more. They returned from there.

Abu Sufyan asked the Muslims to give back the dead body of Naufal. He said that he was prepared to pay hundred camels, in return. The Prophet said that he was free to take the body without paying anything in return saying, "his body is unclean and the return on its blood too is unclean'.

Pagans took his dead body with them. But they had still not given up. They would try to cross the trench several times in a day and night. They had made regular groups who would try doing it every time.

Several horrowing nights passed over Muslims in this manner. Women were terrified in their houses, children were becoming restless without food and the worst condition was those fighters who were fighting a far larger enemy without food, water and other things.

All the powers of Arabia had united to destroy the truth. In this condition there was no hope for the Prophet and his companions except God. He would pray God and cry before him for help

and patience and the strength to stay put and fight.

The death had surrounded them from all around. The enemies were waiting for any opportunity to attack. At that frightful time the Prophet was fully participating in the war. He had divided the army in several group and had assigned them on different parts of the trench. These groups were fighting the enemy on the points assigned to them. A group was under his command. The Prophet was trying to stop the arrows beign shot from enemy lines. He would not take rest for even a moment. Whenever he needed to go for any important need he would go and again get back immediately. In this way he was not only encouraging his people but also giving the greatest standard before the world.

The last day of the war was the worst day. For the whole day they fought. The leading archers of the enemy had gathered before the trench and were shooting arrows without taking a break. Muslims who were extremely tired and were starving for days were standing with great courage and fighting in these trying circumstances. They would not take even a single step back.

Muslims did not face any great loss of lives. Hardly six people were martyred. But Ansar lost their most important man. Sad bin Maaz, the head of the tribe fought with exemplary courage. A bitter enemy Hibban bin Arqa was in his wait. He shot an arrow at him. He got severely injured. At that time Sad saw towards the sky and prayed. It was an exemplary prayer. He said, "O God if the war is going to continue with Quraish then please keep me alive. I don't want to do anything but to fight to those people who have not believed Your messenger and have forced them to exile. But if no war is left then please give me martyrdom from this injury. But Please don't let me die till I am satisfied by punishment to Bani Quraiza."

God bless Maaz. Bani Quraiza be damned who ditched the Prophet. Had they not ditched, Muslims would not have to face such a bad situation".

Muslims were worried. They were also scared and it was now showing on their faces. On the other hands hypocrites were trying

to annoy Muslims from Prophet saying, "We have been ditched by the Prophet".

It was a general condition of the Muslims. Once Muslims saw that the face of the Prophet was glowing with happiness. There was a great spark in his eyes that was telling that the Prophet has been told of the imminent victory.

When the Muslims saw the face of the Prophet glowing with happiness they forgot their own problems. They too became happy. There was no iota of restlessness and worry on their faces. They were sure that God's help was about to come.

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Nuaim bin Masood was constantly pondering over only one thing after returning from the Prophet. And it was how to create rift among the enemy and reduce their pressure from besieged Muslims and destroy the morals of the enemies of the Prophet. He kept on thinking on it till he got an idea.

Nuaim got up immediately and rushed towards the fort of Bani Quraiza. He held great respect among the Jew tribe for his high place in his clan. They would give respect to him and would listen to his talk and seek his counsel on important issues. When he reached there they met him warmly. All the leaders of Banu Quraiza gathered around him. He kept on talking with them on several issues before saying, "You know as to how much I love you people".

"Yes, we have full faith in your love for us" they said in unison.

Then Nuaim came on the point. "You have broken your accord with Muhammad and have decided to be on the side of Quraish and Ghatfan. But have you given a thought about the consequences? If you win it is alright. But what will happed if you lose the battle? They would leave you in the lurch and take their own route. But then you will be left alone bear the consequences. You will be in a very bad condition at that time. Your condition would be worse than Banu Nazir and banu Qainqaa."

"What should we do then?" they asked him.

"I would suggest that you ask them to keep some of their people as surety with you. Then you can go with them. But be sure that they belong to their best families. Then you would be sure that they would not return till they have eliminated Muhammad" Nuaim suggested.

They all appreciated his advice saying that it was the best advice anyone gave them.

Nuaim then insisted that they should not disclose these things to anyone. "Be assured, we are not going to tell it to anyone" they assured him.

When Nuaim left the place they continued talking about him. Everyone was full of praise for him saying how much Nuaim cared for them.

After seeking their leave Nuaim went to Abu Sufyan. Several other leaders of Qurasih were sitting with him. Nuaim said, "O brothers you know as to how much I love you people. I have come to know one thing and I thought it appropriate to inform you about it so you could take necessary step.

"What is that" they asked together. Everyone was looking worried.

"Dear brothers: I am sorry for bringing a bad news for you. I have come to know that Banu Quraiza are repenting for breaking the accord with Muhammad. Now they want to please him in every possible way. I have also a news that they want to call Bani Nazir to Medina again. So they have assured Muhammad that they would give seventy chosen men of Quraish and Ghatfan so he behead them".

They have also assured that they would fight with Quraish together. So be prepared. If they ask for any person as surety then please never do that."

Nuaim left the place after warning them. The leaders of Quraish thanked him a lot for informing them of this great threat. From there Nuaim went to Ghatfan tribe and talked the same to them as well.

This news from Nuaim confused Quraish and Ghatfan. Their

leaders got together and started thinking about Banu Quraiza. Different people proposed different things before them. At last it was decided that some leading leaders of the two tribes would go to them and say that it is long when we came here and it is not possible for us to stay here any longer. Now a decisive action is needed immediately. We should attack Muslims together.

A delegation consisting of leaders of Quraish and Ghatfan went to them and said similar thing to them. Banu Quraiza said, "Tomorrow it is Saturday and we don't fight on Saturday. Propose any other day. We will not fight on your side till you keep a few people with us as surety so that we are assured that if Muhammad gets a dominating hand in the war you would not abandon us".

Leaders of Quraish and Ghatfan had no doubt in Nuaim's words now. They were sure that Banu Quraiza were ready to ditch them.

When they refused to keep any surety with them, there was no doubt left in the minds of Banu Quraiza that Nuaim was true. Now they lost any trust whatsoever and refused to fight with them.

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The enemy was losing the spirit to fight. There were ten thousand soldiers and it was not easy to provide food to such a large number of people and then the rift among them was widening. It was winter and so the icy cold breezes were cutting across their bodies under the open sky. And to add to their woes cyclone did the needful. It totally changed the weather for the worse.

The deafening sounds of lightening and the terrific sound of the fast breeze were scaring the pagans. They were frightened as they ran towards their fields but the winds did not show any mercy for them. They were losing hopes as the cyclone was haunting them everywhere. The storm broke the ropes of their tents and carried tents with it. All their cooking wares were thrown into the ditch. Then the storm had brought dust with it. Now they were even unable to see anywhere. terrified as they had become they started crying in fear, "O destruction. O destruction."

At that terrible time they heard Abu Sufyan who was saying, "O Quraishi brothers. By God it is not a place to stay any longer here. See all the camels are perishing in this dust storm. Banu Quraiza have also ditched us. Now please run away from here". Abu Sufyan mounted on his camel and left the field.

Who could stay after the leader had run away? All soldiers of Quraish too left the field. Ghatfan too retreated. And so after more or less twenty days the siege of Medina ended.

It was Saturday and Muslims had thought that they would have to face the worst attack from them on that day. But when it dawned and Muslims saw towards their camp they found it absolutely empty. The storm had left no sign of them.

" And Allah repulsed the disbelievers in their wrath; they gained no good. Allah averted their attack from believers."

(Surah XXXIII, 25)

The Prophet now returned to Medina. He told his companions "Quraish would never attack you in the future. Now you would go to fight them".

The Prophet after returning from the battlefield went to Aisha's house, applied perfume and offered noon prayers with his companions. He had only completed the prayer when Gabriel descended saying, "I am seeing that you have taken off your armour though the angels have not done so. We chased the enemy to the point of Hamaraul Asad. Now it is the turn of Banu Quraiza. We have to take care of them today itself."

The Prophet called Bilal at the very same time and asked him to inform all the Muslims that they would offer Afternoon prayers only at Banu Quraiza.

Muslims were extremely tired. But they did not think for a moment to follow the Prophet's order. They were happy because they were going to take revenge from Banu Quraiza, the tribe whose people had ditched them in the midst of a terrible war.

When Muslims reached there, they closed the gates to save themselves. Muslims continued their siege for a complete month. Then they gave up. They counseled among them. Kab bin Asad,

their leader suggested, "The only way to save us is that we convert to Islam and accept Muhammad as our leader. In this manner there will be no threat to us and we would be able to live in peace."

But people opposed it fiercely saying they could never abandon Torah. Everything is possible except it.

Kaab said again that first we should kill our women and children and then fight to death with Muslims. If we come out victorious we would marry other women and get children". But Jews were not prepared to do it either. No-body favourred this suggestion. They all said, "Why should we kill them? What joy of life would be there after their killing?" several other suggestions were also put before them. At last they decided to ask the prophet to allow them to go towards Syria. He had allowed Bani Qenqaa and bani Nazir to go there in the past.

The Prophet was not ready to allow them so easily. He said, "Aus have been your allies. Chose anyone of them to decide about you. Whatever would be suggested by them would be acceptable to us. You would be bound by the decision too".

Banu Quraiza favoured this suggestion and left the decision to Sad bin Maaz.

When they had suggested his name they had thought that he would be soft on them and would decide keeping the past relations in mind. But Sad had an absolutely different view. When he heard about it this sentence came effortlessly on their lips. He said, "Now it is the time when Sad should not think anything about the Malamat of Malamat karne wala"

So Sad decided. His verdict was, "All people of the fighting age should be killed, their women and children be arrested and their assets be distributed among Muslims". When the Prophet heard his decision he got immensely happy and said, "Sad, it is the decision of God. You have taken a decision that was the decision of God". Then the decision was implemented.

Sad's desire was fulfilled. He did not live for long and died due to the same injury.

The benefactor arrives in Makkah

Makkah was the birthplace of the Prophet. His whole family was there and he loved every part of it. He was immensely pained when he was forced to leave the city. Tears were rolling down his eyes when he was fleeing the city.

But circumstances did not remain the same forever and things changed in his favour very fast. People saw him entering the same city as victory from where he was forced to leave in the dead of the night. Now he was victorious and God willed that he throw out the idols from Kaba and again fill it with the same belief for which the father and son duo of Abraham and Ishmael had constructed it. The Prophet was immensely happy to get back to his own city, the city of Makkah.

Several years were passed after Hijrah and the Prophet lived all these years in Medina and continued calling people towards God and His religion. Several wars were fought with the People of Makkah in this intervening period.

One night the Prophet saw a dream that he was entering Kaba and that its key was in his hands. He also saw that he was getting his head shaved in the company of his companions. The Prophet was very happy when he got up in the morning. It was the time of *fajr*. He went to the mosque and offered *fajr* prayers there. He used to spend some time with his companions after offering the *fajr* prayers in the mosque. Like usual he sat with them today and told them about his dreams. Then he said, God willing you would certainly enter in the Grand Mosque at Makkah and there would be

no threat for you there."

Makkah was the most beloved city Muslims. They were forced to flee the city and they had not forgotten it. It was a constant reminder to them that they were forced to flee the city. Bilal was tortured very badly in Makkah. But he would start crying when he would remember it. Families of a number of migrants who had fled Makkah to save their lives still lived there.

When they heard these words from the Prophet's lips, it gave them unbelievable happiness. Then the Prophet said to his companions not to delay any longer and prepare to leave for *Umrah.*

The faithful were immensely happy. They congratulated each other and embraced one another in happiness. Then they went to their houses and started preparing to leave for Makkah. They also arranged for sacrificial animals for *Umrah.*

It was Zi Qadah, the eleventh month of the lunar year and sixth year after Hijrah when these pilgrims started out for Makkah. By most of the people it onsisted on 14 hundred believers who had gathered courage to go towards the den of the enemies for pilgrimage. Hypocrites were there in Medina in a large number. But they were searching excuses for not going for the lesser Hajj, as Umrah is known.

The Prophet did not pressurized them much. Now these hypocrites found time to create fear psychosis in the minds of believers. They said, "How would you be able to enter Makkah while the fearsome leaders of Quraish are alive?

The believers replied, "The Prophet has given them beating on numerous occasions. He is more powerful than them". But the hypocrites challenged them that they would not be able to return from Makkah alive.

These words spread very fast in Medina. When Umar heard about the rumours being spread by hypocrites to discourage Muslims from undertaking the journey of Makkah he became furious and asked the Prophet to show these people their place. But the Prophet was not in favour of taking a harsh stand against these people so far. Muslims started out for Makkah leaving behind hyp-

ocrites.

Muslims reached Asfahan where they camped to take some rest. When they were just able to tie their animals they saw a rider fast approaching them. The rider was Bishr bin Sufyan and belonged to Bani Khuzaah. He presented himself before the Prophet and said, "The Quraish have come to know about your journey. They are furious and have sent Khalid bin Walid with a strong cavalry to give you a lesson. He is waiting for you before Makkah".

The news must be true, thought the Prophet as Bishr was among the leaders of Khazaah and his tribe was a sworn enemy of Quraish. The tribe had also very good relations with Medina and Muslims. The Prophet was extremely pained after listening the news of Quraish's preparations to attack the pilgrims.

"I am pained for Quraish. Their daily wars would do nothing but destroy their power. They had nothing to lose had they allowed me to continue my work. If the other tribes of Arab were able to contain me they had got their purpose and if I was successful it was also their gain.

By God, I would continue to fight for the message I have brought till God give it dominance. O my people, Quraish have started out to fight with you. If we continue walking on this route we will have to fight them and it would be a fierce battle. We do not want it now. Is there someone who could take us there from another route?

A man from Aslam clan came forward and presented himself for the job. He was well aware of all the routes around Makkah and knew all the alternate routes. "I would guide. The enemies would not be able to reach us and they would be sitting there even when we would be in Makkah" he said.

"Guide us. We are behind you" the asked.

The man took the reins of the camel on which the Prophet had mounted himself and started leading this large gathering of pilgrims. The route was very porous and passed through hills and mountains. After great turmoil they reached Hudaibiya. It was a

well nine miles before Makkah. At that point the Prophet's camel stopped and despite every effort it refused to go even a single inch.

The Prophet could have taken another camel and reached Makkah within hours but he knew that there must be some greater good in it. So he stopped there itself and waited for revelation to come that could guide him.

The Prophet asked his companions to stop there and erect tents. The people did not question the Prophet's decision, but the disappointment was evident from their faces. They were amazed as to why the Prophet instead of marching towards Makkah stopped there? They were looking towards entering their own city to complete their pilgrimage. Muslims felt extremely disappointed when they had to stop at Hudapiya.

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Pagans in Makkah had lost their sleeps. For them the arrival of Muhammad at their door with such a large number of his companions was a terrible thought. They were keeping their fingers crossed and waiting for Khalid the son of Walid to do some magic. Khalid had turned the tables very successfully in the Battle of Uhud and they dreamt that he could do the same here too. They were thinking that they can restore their honor only when Khalid made a successful assault against the Muslim troops otherwise it was a terrible end to their illustrious past.

They lost every hope when Khalid returned without being able to bring any welcome news for them. He told them that Muhammad has successfully avoided his party and has reached Hudaibiya. Muhammad had again failed all their planning.

They were even not prepared to think that Muhammad whom they had forced to leave the city mercilessly had returned. And that he was not alone. He has come with a large number of people who were prepared to give up their lives on his mere hint. They had amply seen the bravery of Muslim troops in Badr, Uhud and then in the Battle of Trench and they had come to know that Muslims could give up their lives but not their belief. The religion to them

was more important than their lives.

The leaders of Quraish assembled in Darun Nadwa once again. Their faces were reflective of their worries. Uncertainty and insecurity about future was write large on their faces. They vowed that they would not allow Muhammad to enter in their lifetime.

They all were thinking as to how to stop Muhammad from entering Makkah. They were also thinking about the people in Makkah who had converted to Islam but had kept it secret. They were worried that what would happen if these people ditched them and went on to attack them from behind.

Then a voice came. "Muhammad says that he has not come to fight us. If he is true in what he says then we should be polite with him and try to return him after trying to make him understand our points and worries. And if he ditches us then we are not the people who would run back. Battleground is our main field and fighting is our main work" one Quraish leader said.

"What should we do then?" asked another leader.

"I believe that we should send some leaders of Bani Khazaah to him and ask them to know as to what Muhammad wants. They should try to convince him that he should go back." He said.

"Bani Khazah are our enemies. Why should we send them? what if they ditch us?" asked another leader.

Be assured on that front. They have their families in mecca as well as large properties here. Where would they go if they ditch us now?" he said.

They all liked the suggestion and chose some people from banu Khazaah to do the job for them. Budail Khuzai was their leader.

When this delegation reached to the Prophet he met them with great enthusiasm and love and told them, "Muslims have come here for the pilgrimage. They all have great respect for the place. If Quraish don't do any mischief we would do circumambulation and return back."

This delegation returned to Makkah and gave them the massage of the Prophet. They also suggested them to accept the pro-

posal. Now there was dissension among even Quraish leaders as to what to do now. A number of people said that they should sign a treaty with Muhammad and he should be allowed the pilgrimage. But others were dead against anything of the sort. "We would not allow it till the doomsday" they said.

A leading Quraish figure said, "are you prepared that enemies come and do what they want and leave the place and destroy your honour'. "What should we do now" asked others.

"I believe that we should send Hulais bin Alqama. He is the leader of triblas and has an dreadful personality. Everyone is fearful of them due to their power. So if he does the job for us and Muhammad goes back, our purpose is complete and if Muhammad turns down his message and he gets angry then he will fight on our side" the leader said.

Hulais started to see the Prophet in his usual dress. When the Prophet saw him, he said, "See it is Hulais coming towards us. His people love sacrifices. Turn your sacrificial animals towards him so he sees from his own eyes that we have come for only pilgrimage and have not come here for pillage and rapine.

Muslims went towards Hulais crying *Labbaik* (The call Muslims make at the time of pilgrimage). They also ran their animals towards him and his people. When Hulais saw that these were only camels brought for sacrifices, He was unable to see this injustice being meted out to Prophet and his companions and returned back. He was so convinced of Muslims' intention that he did not even meet the Prophet.

He came back to the Quraish leaders who were awaiting his return and said angrily, "By God we have not allied with you to witness that you would stop somebody who has come for its respect, from entering in the house of God. And how it is that all the tribes of Quraish come for the pilgrimage here and the son of Abdul Muttalib is not allowed to do. And he is not behind anyone in respect. Remember, if you stop Muhammad from entering Kaba I would forget alliance between us and fight you from Muhammad's side."

This step of Quraish leaders too backfired and instead of putting Muhammad in his place he was now claiming to fight Quraish if Muhammad was not allowed to see Kaba. But they tried to soothe Hulais and said, "Let us sort it out. It is our internal issue. We would finalise something that would be good for us all".

Hulais accepted their words and propmised that he would not interfere in their internal affairs.

When the Quraish were sure of his impartiality they sent fifty armed riders to attack Muslims in the dark of the night. In the dead of night they started out towards Hudaibiyah to attack Muslims, but they were surrounded even before reaching there and arrested. They were later presented before the Prophet.

When the Prophet came out of his tent to see at them he saw that they were shivering from fear. "What can stop you all from being killed after your involvement in such a heinous crime?" asked the Prophet. "Your mercifulness, kindness" answered those riders with not even remotest of expectation that they would be let off. "Go back. You are free. Tell your leaders that Muhammad has not come for war and plunder. They may get to their senses" answered the Prophet with unmatched great heartedness.

They returned to their people. Though they were assured by the Prophet that he had not come for war, they were aware of the severity of their crime and could not believe that it could be forgiven. They were now sure of a great retaliatory attack from Muslims.

The Prophet sent Uthman to go and meet Quraish leaders and tell them as to why Muslims had come.

Uthman entered the city under the protection of his cousin Aban bin Saeed whom he met at the entrance of the city. He conveyed the message of the Prophet to Quraish leaders. The Prophet had said, "there are only two probabilities, either allow us to do circumambulation around Kaba or be prepared for war".

"You can do circumambulation. We can allow only you to do it. Other Muslims will have to go back without doing it", the Quraish leaders said.

Uthman could have never prepared for that so he refused it without giving it a thought and said that they will have to allow all the Muslims to complete the pilgrimage.

Then the Quraish said that Uthman was under their captivity and he could not go back from there. They later detained Uthman.

Meanwhile it was rumoured in Makkah that Uthman was killed. When this rumour reached Muslims who were camping at Hudaibiya they felt enraged and vowed to take revenge. The Prophet said, "Taking Uthman's revenge was a binding duty upon Muslims". Then he sat under a tree and all Muslims took oath on his hands to take revenge for Uthman's murder even at the cost of their death. The first to take the vow was Abusinan Asadi. Later all the Muslims followed him and now they were prepared for a battle. It was announced that all should prepare for a war.

This allegiance pleased the God. He appreciated the style in Qur'an and so this allegiance was named as *Bait-e-Rizwan.*

When pagans of Makkah heard about this allegiance on the name of Uthman to take revenge, they felt shivers under their spines. They all said unanimously that they should go for a treaty with Muslims otherwise they all end up losing badly.

There was a man called Suhail bin Amar. He was an unmatched public speaker. He was known in Arabia as the Speaker of Quraish. They ran him towards Hudaibiya to resume talks on some sort of compromise.

When Suhail came to Muslims' camp at Hudaibiya he felt alarmed after seeing their extensive war preparations. He approached before the Prophet and said, "Be assured, Uthman is safe and sound. The news of his death is baseless. I have come to you for a compromise and here your people are preparing for war. Quraish have vowed that they wouldn't allow you to enter Makkah this year. This compromise is to be based on some conditions. These conditions would ensure our mutual safety. If you accept these terms and go for an agreement we would be saved from a dis-

astrous war and you would be known for the success of this agreement".

"What are the conditions?" asked the Prophet.

"You will have to return from here without doing cumambulation. You will come here the next year and would leave the city within three days. You would not bring any other arm except swords and these swords would be kept inside sheaths."

"What are the other terms?" asked the Prophet.

"If someone from Quraish converts to Islam and comes to Medina you will have to return him but if any Muslim from Medina leaves Makkah and comes to us we would not return him" Suhail continued.

The Prophet kept quite and closed his eyes for a moment. This was his condition at the time of revelations. On the other hand Muslims were extremely angry over the conditions of the agreement. But they kept quite. The Prophet opened his eyes and asked, "What is more"?

"This agreement is for a period of ten years. During these ten years no one would fight anyone and peace would be maintained".

"What are the other conditions?" the Prophet asked again.

"Every tribe would be free to join any of the two parties in the agreement". These are the terms of Quraish. Please think over it before the condition gets worse. To be true we have great expectations from your wisdom and astuteness.

The Prophet accepted all the conditions and aksed Ali to write the agreement.

When Muslims saw that the Prophet had accepted these conditions they felt very humiliated. Umar was one of the most disappointed among them. He came to the Prophet and asked, "Aren't you the messenger of God"?

"There is no doubt it", the Prophet answered.

"Aren't we Muslims"? asked Umar again.

"Why not? Is there any doubt in it?" the Prophet replied.

"Aren't they non-believers?" Umar persisted.

"They are the worst of believers. There is no iota of doubt

about it" the Prophet answered him calmly.

"Then why should we accept their humiliating terms? Why should we conclude the treaty on their conditions?" Umar asked the Prophet.

The Prophet tried to assuage Umar's feeling by saying, "O Umar I am the slave of God and His messenger. It is His decision. Be assured that He would not leave us alone".

Tears were visible in the eyes of Umar when he left the Prophet and came to Abu Bakr and repeated almost the same words before him. Abu Bakr tried to assuage his feelings by saying, "Umar keep patience. Don't you know that Muhammad is the messenger of God and whatever he does he does by God's orders".

When the agreement was being written, the Prophet asked Ali to write, Bismilla hirrahmanir Raheem (In the name of God the most merciful), but Suhail interrupted and said, we don't write so. Please begin with Bismikallahumma (In the name of our God). The Prophet agreed and asked Ali to write as proposed by Suhail.

Then the Prophet said, "Ali write that these are terms under which Muhammad, the Messenger of God signed peace agreement with Suhail bin Amar". The Prophet had not completed his sentence when Suhail stopped Ali saying, "Had Quraish accepted you a Prophet there was no question of all this squabbling and fighting. You please write only your and your fathers name".

"Whether you accept or not, By God, I am His messenger". The Prophet then asked Ali, "Write, these are terms on which Muhammad bin Abdullah has signed a peace agreement with Suhail bin Amar". The terms of agreement were then written and a few people had asked from both the sides were asked to sign on the agreement paper. This agreement came to be known as the Agreement of Hudaibiah as it was concluded at that place.

At the very time when this agreement was being written, a man came and fell before Muslims. His hands and feet were chained and his face was saying as to how much he has been tortured. The man was Abu Jandal and he was the son of Suhail bin Amar who was in the process of signing the treaty with the Prophet. Life for Abu

Jandal in Makkah was made miserable only because he had accepted Islam and had accepted to be the slave of his God. He must have reached there after great problems.

When Suhail saw his son there he was enraged with anger. He said in anger, "He is my son. If you stop him here you would dishonor the agreement."

"The agreement is yet to be inked?" asked the Prophet.

"Whether it is written or not. We would not accept it if you stop my son here" Amar said clearly.

"We would not stop him, but I request you to leave him here" the Prophet asked him.

"I would not accept it till the doomsday" Suhail said defiantly.

The Prophet asked him several times to leave his son there, but he did not agree. The Prophet was extremely disturbed due to it. Then the Prophet saw towards Abu Jandal and said, "Abu Jandal, Keep patience. God would definitely provide a way to come out of this situation. We have signed the agreement and we cannot break it".

Suhail caught his son by his neck and started dragging him on the ground. Abu Jandal continued yelling for help saying, "Why are you sending me in the same hell again. Are you handing me to pagans to continue torturing me?"

This scene extremely pained Muslims. Umar who was unable to control him gave a sword to Abu Jandal so he could defend him. But Abu Jandal could not gather the courage to do that. So Suhail forcibly took him to Makkah.

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Muslims returned to Medina. But they were feeling disappointed. They were more disappointed because of the conditions Quraish were able to impose upon them. The incident of Abu Jandal was no less disappointing for them.

Merely a few days had passed when a similar situation arose. A man named Abu Baseer was able to escape to Medina from Makkah. He was a very committed Muslim and was forced to leave

Makkah under worst conditions. He had merely reached Medina when two men from Makkah came and asked for his return under the terms of agreement.

The Prophet had to do that so he was sent with the two people. Muslims saw that the two imprisoned him and started out for Makkah. Muslims saw them but could not do anything.

When the two people reached Zul Hulaifa, a place in between Makkah and Medina, Abu Baseer got an opportunity and killed one of the two. The other one was able to escape. Abul Baseer came to Medina and appeared before the Prophet. He said that he was already returned to Makkah and now he had no responsibility over him. He then left Medina and finally settled at a place near the seashore. He would ambush any trade caravan passing through the area. Several other Muslims who were suffering from similar circumstances in Makkah also fled from there and joined Abul Baseer. Quraish could not control these people even after their great efforts. They became so much strong that Quraish were forced to request Muhammad to revoke that condition from agreement and asked the Prophet to call those people to Medina. The Prophet later asked them to come and settle in Medina.

The insistence of Quraish to revoke that particular term from the agreement amazed Muslims no end. They were astounded as to why Quraish leaders were insisting to revoke the term that was to their greatest advantage. But when they came to know the reason they realized that the Agreement of Hudaibiah was a great victory of Muslims and not their defeat as they had thought in the first instance. At that time they realized the wisdom behind the agreement.

The next year Muslims went for pilgrimage to Makkah. They stayed for three days thre and then returned after completing the pilgrimage. Quraish too kept their words and did not do any harm to Muslims.

The eight-year of the Hijrah was a great year for Muslims. A large number of people from all over Arab embraced Islam. A number of leading lights of Quraish entered Islam after condemn-

ing paganism and idol worship. These people included the great Muslim warriors of the later years like Khalid the son of Walid and Amar the son of Aas.

Khalid was the best general of Quraish forces and Amar bin Aas was known as the mind of Arab. Later both of them carried the Islamic flag to two different and great powers of the time and became great fighters of Islam. One conquered Syria while the other one conquered Egypt.

Khazaah and Bakr were two famous tribes of Arab. Their enmity for each other was also as famous in Arab as the two tribes. When Islam appeared as a danger for them on the horizons they forgot their long held enmity and spent years in demolish Islam campaign. But when the Agreement of Hudaibiah was signed Bakr thought that the danger from Islam was a thing of past. So they attacked Khazaah.

Khazaah had sided with Muslims as their bitter enemy, Bakr were allies of Quraish. As per the agreement if a ally of Quraish attacked an ally of Muslims it would automatically break the agreement. The attack of Bakr against Khazaah was enough to revoke the agreement. But that was not enough. Quraish too in their enmity for Muslims helped Bakr against Khazaah. Their people were fighting alongside Bakr in disguises.

The people of Khazaah who could not face this combined assault took shelter in the grand mosque of Makkah but they defied all its honour and attacked them there too. Some people of Khazaah who escaped that onslaught approached the Prophet and pleaded for his help. As per the agreement he was boud to help these people so the Prophet immediately sent a man to Quraish with three condition,

1) Pay blood money for all the people of Khazaah killed in the attack.

2) Break your relations with Bani Bakr

3) Announce that the agreement is valid no more.

A leader of Quraish announced on behalf of all leaders that, "We accept the third condition. There is no agreement between we

and you".

Though he said it on behalf of all the people of Quraish, but they felt very worried when they realized the consequences of it. They immediately sent Abu Sufyan to Medina as their envoy so he review the agreement and take some time to implement the conditions asked by Muhammad.

One of Abu Sufyan's daughters Umme Habiba was married to the Prophet and used to live in Medina with him.He first went to his daughter's house. He thought that the daughter would feel affection for the father and he would be able to pressurize through her to revive the agreement. But the daughter's love for Islam was more than her love for her father. So Abu Sufyan was disappointed.

He understood that his daughter wouldn't help him so he directly went to the Prophet and gave the message of the Quraish. The Prophet did not reply anything and remained silent in his reply.

Now he went to Abu Bakr hoping to get help from him. he refused to do anything in this regard. From there he went to Umar. He became furious after seeing him. He even did not talk to Abu Sufyan.

Now he went to Fatima, the youngest daughter of the Prophet. Hasan her elder son was in her lap. Abu Sufyan asked her to ask Hasan say, that I have revived agreement between the two enemies. Fatima refused without any hesitation saying how could any child interfere in these affairs of governance. She also said that how come one can say anything when the Prophet has decided somethingelse.

Abu Sufyan still did not give up. He went to Ali and presented everything before him. He said that, "No one can interfere in anything that has been decided by the Prophet. Thre is only one way. You go to the mosque and announce that I revive the agreement of Hudaibiah,

Abu Sufyan did exactly as directed by Ali and returned to Makkah. When he reached there and said what he had done there people laughed at him saying that Ali had joked with him and he

could not understand a joke. Ate agreement revived in this manner?

The leaders of Quraish gathered once again to discuss the issue and reached the conclusion that they should go for a peace agreement with Khazaah. They also agreed to pay the blood money so they would not help Muhammad if he attacked Makkah.

It was agreed upon. Abu Sufyan finalized it with one leading Khazaah leader Budail, who used to live in Makkah. They had agreed that they would send the blood money to Bani Khazaah. Then both of them reached Khazaah to conclude the agreement.

The Prophet had asked all Muslim tribes to prepare for a decisive war. He in a message sent to all Muslim tribes said, "Everyone who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement should reach Medina before Ramadan".

Muslims in an overwhelmingly large number responded over his call. A number of tribes came to Medina with full war preparations. It was the 10th day of Ramadan the ninth month of the Lunar year and eight year of Hijrah when the Prophet with his ten thousand companions started out for Makkah. On the way to Makkah he met his uncle Abbas who was coming from Makkah. The Prophet welcomed him and sent his family to Medina.

The Islamic Army reached the spring near the Khazaah and camped there in a large field. People erected tents for the shelter. When it was night the Prophet asked all the tribes to light inferno. He aimed to impress the onlookers by the might of the Muslim army. His order was carried out.

Abbas was among the people who were on patrol. He was guarding a hillock when he saw two people talking with each other.

"Budail! Are you seeing? I have never seen such fire" said the first.

"Abu Sufyan! By god it is the fire of Khazaah. It seems they are preparing for the war".

"They cannot collect such might. This great fire and so many

people" said Abu Sufyan.

Abbas could not control him and said, "Abu Sufyan! I am Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib. This is the fire of Muhammad".

Abu Sufyan was amazed by his presence there. "How did you come here alone from Makkah?" he asked.

"I have been guided to true path by Allah. Now I belong to this army of Islam" Abbas answered.

Then Abu Sufyan informed Abbas that Banu Khazaah and Quraish have concluded a peace treaty and then asked Abbas to plead for Quraish case.

You will have to accept Islam first, demanded Abbas. Budail immediately responded by reciting, I witness there in no god but God and I witness that Mhammad is the messenger of God. Abu Sufyan was still hesitant. Abbas finally convinced him and he too converted to Islam.

Abbas brought the two in the presence of the Prophet. He was very happy when he saw that Abbas and Budail have accepted Islam and were among believers. The Prophet congratulated both of them for being blessed by the new faith.

Now Makkah was within their eyesight. The Prophet divided the army in several parts and gave every part under different commanders. They all were ordered to enter the city from different gates and were given stern orders not to touch anyone till somebody attacks first.

At that time the Prophet saw that Abu Sufyan was looking upset. The Prophet said, "What is the matter Abu Hanzalah (Abu Sufyan's title), you are not participating in the discussuion?

"O messenger of God! Quraish are now under your control. I see that there are several people in your army who want to take revenge for the past mistakes of these people. I request you to use restrain in their case and don't allow the adversaries to laugh at us" Abu Sufyan said.

The Prophet assured him saying, "Be assured Abu Sufyan. There are relatives of Muslims in Makkah. And then there is house of God, built by Abraham and Ishmael. Go to your people and

announce: 'Muhammad would enter in Makkah as a good brother. There is no dominant and dominated. There is no conqueror and conquered. It is the day of love and unity and the day of peace. Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan is under safety. Whoever closes the door of his house is also safe. Whoever enters the grand mosque is also safe".

When Abu Sufyan heard these reassuring words he felt immensely happy. He went running to Makkah and gave them this happy news and this spread all over the city within moments. People who were trembling with fear for doing everything against Muslims and Islam and trying to destroy Muhammad and his companions felt at peace only following these reassuring words of the Prophet.

The pagans threw their arms. Most residents of Makkah closed the doors of their houses and started looking at the great army of Islam from their rooftops. A number of pagans who felt ashamed seeing this grand victory of Muslims fled to nearby hills. Today the Islamic army was entering its own abode and it was the day of Islam's reckoning. Islam today dominated the Arab for the first time in centuries.

Muslims entered the city without a single fight. It was done with complete peace and amity. No one was attacked, no sword was used today except for once. Some disgruntled Quraish men attacked the army that was entering Makkah under Khalid's command. Khalid and his people were forced to retaliate that resulted in the killing of 13 pagans and martyrdom of three Muslims. The pagans who had attacked Khalid's group later retreated and Khalid and his men entered the city.

When the peace was fully established in Makkah, the Prophet headed for the house of God, Kaba. The great house of God built by Abraham. The house that was memory of Abraham who was dead against idol worship had been made the house of 360 idols. Today there were 360 idols kept in the verandah of that house. The Prophet would only touch these idols with his stick reciting, and the idols would automatically fall on the ground.

At that time Kaba was presenting a different scene. An ocean of people had gathered near it to know their fates. At that time the following historic sentences were heard from his mouth:

There is no God but Allah. He is alone and has no partner. He has made His promise true. He helped His slave and made little all the armies Alone. Listen

Then the Prophet announced to make the trade of wine illegal. The Prophet saw towards the people of Quraish and asked them sarcastically: "O people of Quraish! Do you know what I am going to do with you?"

A number of voices arose simultaneously: "Good. For, you are a kind brother and the son of a kind brother".

Then the Prophet said

"Have no faer this day ! Go, you all are free."

Do you know who were those people who were being showered with so merciful words? These were the people who were bitterest enemies of the Prophet and had done everything to destroy Islam from the face of the world. They were the people who always spewed venom against the Prophet and his companions, they were the people whose swords had attacked the Prophet and had put thorns on his paths. Among them were the people who had mercilessly thrown stones at him and those who had injured him severely. Among them were the people who would put his companions on the burning ground of Arabian deserts and put heavy stones over them hoping that they would renounce their faith under these oppressive tactics. Among the people who were today standing before the Prophet were also those who would mark his companions with burning iron rods to pressurize them to leave their adopted belief.

It was a scene never seen in the history and a path never traversed. It is impossible to measure the extant of the magnanimity of the Prophet on that day without looking back at what the pagans and their cohorts did to the Prophet and his companions during their stay in Makka and later when these people were forced to flee Makka and take refuge in an alien land.

The Prophet then asked for the key of the Kaba. When the door was opened, the Prophet found that there were the photographs of Abraham and his son Ishmael with dice in their hands, both of whom were the unknown enemies of idols. The Prophet asked his people to erase these photographs and said, "God destroy these people. The two were the Prophet of God far removed from anything like gambling".

Umar then entered Kaba and erased all the Photographs on the walls. When Kaba was completely cleansed the Prophet entered the mosque. Bilal and Talha accompanied him. He offered two-rakah prayer and said takbir loudly.

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The last journey

It was the tenth year of Hijrah when the Prophet started out from Medina for Hajj. It was a historical moment with more than one hundred thousand believers walking behind Muhammad. This Hajj is called Hajjatul Wida or the last Hajj due to the fact that it was the last Pilgrimage of the Prophet and he could not find an opportunity to visit Makka after it.

Some people call it Hajjul Balagh due to the fact that the Prophets had completed the cause for which he had come in the world. He had fulfilled his responsibility and had made the message of God public. The Prophet delivered a historical speech on the occasion that set the preference right for all Muslim generations to come.

The Prophet began the speech saying, "Dear Brothers! Listen whatever I say carefully, memorize it and follow it. I am not sure as to whether I would be able to meet you here.

Remember! You would prosper if you follow my words."

Then the Prophet gave his last will saying:

"Hold the Book of God and the way of His Prophet forcefully.

Take care of people's life, wealth and their honour. Don't be guilty of breach of trust if someone keeps something with you as trust. Never resort to killings and usury."

He while delivering his historical went on to tell the sea of people assembled there as to how believers should live and how should they treat common people. The Prophet laid great emphasis on equality. He broke all the boundaries of caste and creed saying:

"O people! Your Creator is one and you are from a single father. You all are sons and daughters of Adam. And Adam was made of clay.

The most high in the eyes of God from among you is one who fears Him most.

Listen! No Arab has any superiority over non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab. Superiority is not due to one's caste or creed but only due to taqwa (God fearing)."

When he delivered this historical speech the Prophet asked the gathering, "O people! have I conveyed the message of God?" All the people replied in unison, "Yes O Prophet of Allah you have conveyed the message of God." Then the Prophet said thrice, God be witness over it.

When the Prophet completed his words, Bilal called for prayer and the Prophet followed by Muslims offered his Zuhr and Asr prayers together. When the Prophet was offering it he was revealed a message of God:

"This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-Islam"

(Surah V, 3)

When the Prophet offered this verse before the believers Abu Bakr started crying. He understood that the parting time was fast approaching. The people had also seen Abu Bakr crying when the following verse was revealed upon the Prophet.

"When Allah's succor and the triumph cometh. And thou seest mankind entering the religion of Allah in troops. Then hymn the praises of thy Lord, and seek forgiveness of Him. Lo! He is ever ready to show mercy."

(Surah CX)

When Abu Bakr heard these verses he understood that the task for which the Prophet had come to the world is finally over and now the Prophet was a guest for merely some more days. When these thoughts came to his mind, tears filled his eyes.

It was natural. There should be no amazement over it. The

Prophet was the most beloved to him. He was the love of his eyes and the satisfaction of his heart. He was not alone to adore the Prophet as much. Every believer was ready to give up everything for the sake of the Prophet. They did not value anything when it came to the Prophet, be it their wealth or their children or for that matter their own lives.

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Not even three months had passed when the Prophet fell severely ill. The Prophet had never fallen so ill before.

The illness began with a certain note. A night the Prophet got up from his bed and told his slave Abu Muwaihba that he was ordered by God to immediately go to Jannatul Baqi graveyard and plead for the mercy of God for the people buried there. The Prophet asked Abu Muwaihba to come along.

The Prophet went with his slave to the graveyard. When they reached there the Prophet said "God bless you o people of graves. Accept congratulation for the place where you have reached. Your places are better than the places of those people who are alive.

I am seeing turbulent times and calamities that are coming ahead. These are as dark as the darkest parts of a dark night. They would come one after the other. And every calamity would be worse than the one preceding it."

The Prophet on the same occasion prayed for a considerable time for the people buried in the graveyard. Most of the people buried there were companions of the Prophet.

Abu Muwaihba says that after he completed the prayers for the dead the Prophet seeing him said, O Abu Muwaihba, I have been given the keys of all the treasuries of the world so I could live here. On one side are these treasuries of the world and Paradise. On the other side is meeting my God and Paradise.

"I scarify my parents upon you. Please accept to live among the treasuries of the world and later go to Paradise" Abu Muwaihba plainly said as to what his heart said.

"No Abu Muwaihba! I have accepted meeting my God and

Paradise" the Prophet comforted him.

Then he returned from the graveyard. It was the eleventh year of the Hijrah and the last days of Safar, second month of the Muslim lunar calendar or the first days of Rabiul Awwal, the third month.

The Prophet's health started deteriorating since the very morning when he returned from the graveyard. On that day the Prophet was with his wife Zainab.

When the Prophet passed through the room of Aisha in the same morning he saw that she was suffering from headache and was crying in low voice, "Oh my head, Oh my head".

The Prophet said, "Aisha! By God I am suffering from more severe pain then you. Oh my head, my head".

Then the Prophet mockingly said, "What about the idea that you die before me so I dress you for your funeral and lead your funeral prayer and then lay you with my own hands in the grave".

Aisha who was quite young at that time replied in the same vein, "Any other wife would better suit for this purpose".

When the Prophet heard these words from Aisha a smile covered his whole face. But as the pain was getting more severe he could not stand there any longer.

It was the practice of the Prophet that he would spend a day with every wife. Even during the illness of the Prophet during his last days he would follow it. He would go to all of his wives as had been his habit. For five days he continued it even during the worst phases of his illness. But when his condition became serious and he was no longer able to walk he asked all his wives to come to him and then asked them to propose one house where he could stay now. They all happily agreed on the name of Aisha.

The weakness had enervated the Prophet and he was not able to walk without any support. Ali and Fadl the son of Abbas brought him to Aisha's house. It was severe headache and due to its intensity a piece of cloth was kept on his head. It was Wednesday and the eight day of his illness.

Muslims were very anxious due to the deteriorating health of

the Prophet. The Prophet had never been so ill. It had also added to their worries.

During the sixth year of the Hijrah he had felt a mild fever. That was gone within a few days.

During the seventh year a Jew lady had served meet that had been mixed with poison. The Prophet felt pain and anxiety for a few days and within days there was no trace of poisoning.

These were only two previous occasions when the believers saw the Prophet suffering from any health related problem. Otherwise he was always healthy and full of vigour. And there was nothing amazing in it. The Prophet had made a routine that did not allow the illness to come near him.

He ate only when he felt very hungry. He used to leave the meal when he was still hungry. It was the reason that when the king of Egypt sent some gifts to the Prophet that included honey, two bondmaids and a doctor the Prophet accepted the first two and returned the physician saying, "We don't eat without feeling hungry and whenever we eat we eat less than our appetite. There is no work of illness here."

The Prophet used to maintain exemplary cleanliness. He would go for ablution five times a day, used clean cloths and despised unclean living habits. He also asked others to maintain the same lifestyle. He used to say, "Cleanliness is the half of belief".

He also detested inactivity and idleness and used to keep him fit and in order. He would either be praying or doing the rounds of the city for the welfare of his people. He even used to forget his sleep due to his busy schedule.

He was never attracted towards worldly pleasures and luxuries. He was far from any worldly and harmful habits.

These are the things that ensure good health for any person who take care of these habits. It was the reason that tormented the minds of Prophet's companions and his wives when the severity of his illness did not come down.

There was another reason too that made them restless. Whenever the Prophet fell ill earlier he used to pray for his health,

but this time round he never prayed for his health. Instead he always talked of the last journey every man has to undergo.

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The Prophet's condition was deteriorating fast. The temperature would either go up or abruptly come down. He used to go to the mosque till the time he could gather enough power to walk up to there and used to lead the prayers. The last prayer he led was of Maghrib. When the time of Isha came the Prophet asked, "Has the prayer of Isha been offered?" the companion answered that they were waiting for him. the Prophet asked for the water in the bucket. He took the bath and tried to stand, but could not and went unconscious. When he regained his consciousness he again asked, "Has the prayer been offered?" Companions reiterated that they were waiting for him to come. The Prophet again took the bath and again tried to stand but again lost consciousness. He when regained consciousness repeated the same question and again took the bath when he was told that the people were waiting for him.

When the Prophet regained consciousness he said:

Tell Abu Bakr to lead the prayers."

His voice is very low and he starts weeping when he recites Qur'an. People wouldn't be able to listen his voice" Aisha said.

"Tell Abu Bakr to lead prayers" the Prophet insisted.

Aisha repeated the same words.

The Prophet who was feeling severe pain said angrily in loud voice, Tell Abu Bakr, He will lead prayers."

Abu Bakr followed his orders. He continued leading the prayers till last. These were 17 time prayers that Abu Bakr led in the life of the Prophet.

Four days before his death the Prophet felt peaceful. It was the time of Fajar prayers. He took bath from seven bucketful water. He used bandage around his head and went to the mosque with the help of Fazal the son of Abbas and Sauban. The prayer was in progress. When Abu Bakr realized that it was Prophet who had come he tried to vacate the place for the Prophet, but the Prophet

stopped him from leaving the place and sat besides him. After the prayer was over, the Prophet delivered a small speech. He said:

"O believers, I have come to know that you are fearful of your Prophet's death. Why it is so?

All the Prophets who came before me have died. I am one like them.

Listen! Always respect those who migrated from Makkan before others.

Migrants too should respect one another and take care of them.

Always take care of ansar. Respect and love the ansar who love and respect you. And those who commit mistake should be pardoned."

Then the Prophet added:

"Muslims would increase in numbers, but the number of ansar would come down in the same way as is the quantity of salt in the food. They have done their job. Now yow you will have to do your work. They are like liver in my body. I ask my successor to treat them well."

The Prophet then said:

"Believers, I have allowed only those things that were allowed by God. And have prohibited only those things that were prohibited by God.

Believers! Take revenge if I have beaten anyone. It is my back before you.

One should take revenge if I said something wrong to anyone.

Take anything from me if I owe something to somebody."

A companion got up and said, O Prophet you owe three dirhams to me." The Prophet paid him three dirhams and then said, "O Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet!"

"O Saphiya, the aunt of the Prophet! Do something for the God. I would not be able to save you from God."

The Prophet had three gold coins with him. When he took ill he feared that he might die when these gold coins were still with him. So the Prophet had ordered that these be distributed among

the poor. But as people were busy in his nursing they forgot.

A day before his death, the Prophet remembered about these gold coins. He asked: What about those gold coins?"

"O messenger of God these are still in the house" replied Aisha.

The Prophet asked her to bring them, put them on his palm and said:

"What Muhammad would tell his God if he dies and these coins remain with him?"

Then the Prophet distributed those coins among some poor families of Medina.

The pain increased. Temperature soared so much that his whole body became very hot. The beloved daughter Fatima used to come to him daily. He would get up whenever she came out of his love for his daughter, call to him and then took a peck. But due to his extreme weakness the Prophet could not stand when Fatima came that day. She herself came to him and sat besides him.

The temperature was so high that he would lose consciousness every now and then. Cold water was kept in a pan besides him. He would dip his hands in the pot and then would rub his hands on his face. He was looking very restless. At that time the following words were heard from him: "God destroy Jews and Christians! They have started worshipping the graves of their Prophets."

Then the Prophet again said, "Never, never two religions be allowed on Arab lands".

On Monday evening, the fever came down. It seemed as if the fever had gone. Restlessness had also come down. Whoever saw felt as if the Prophet was cured. People felt happy and rejoiced.

His room was adjacent to the mosque. When it was morning, the Prophet raised the curtains and saw his companions offering prayers. He smiled and felt satisfied that there was indeed a group of people who after following his teachings was remembering God. On the sound, the companions thought that the Prophet wanted to come out of the room. Abu Bakr who was leading prayers wanted to leave the place for him, but the Prophet stopped

him from doing so and came back inside the room. He was feeling so much enervated that he could not even close the curtains. It was almost impossible for him to stand on his feet but still he was happy over the happiness of his companions.

The weakness was on rise. It seemed as if the inevitable death was approaching albeit slowly. The Prophet asked for cold water in a vessel. It was brought before him immediately. He would feel the water by keeping his hands inside the vessel and then rub it on his face. He would cover and uncover his face in the bad sheet. He was continuously reciting the following words:

O My Lord, Please make it easy for me to bear the pain of death.

Fatima was increasingly becoming anxious. She cried" Oh, the pain of my father. The Prophet said, "Your father would never feel pain again".

It was afternoon. The breath was slowing down when people heard these words from his mouth, Prayers and good behaviour with slaves". Then he raised his hands and said, There is no one, except that Greatest Companion".

These were the last words heard from the Prophet. His pure soul went to his God.

It was Monday and the twelfth day of Rabiul Awwal, the third month of Muslim lunar calendar. It was greatest shock for the companions of the Prophet. For them it seemed as if it was the end of the world.

The Prophet was 63 years when the marching orders came for him.

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Has the Prophet really died? It was a news that shocked Muslims more than anything. They had never experienced that terrible feeling even when they lost dearest ones from their own family.

How it could be? A number of them had seen him merely hours ago. Not only they had seen him, the Prophet had also talked

to them.

How it could be?

The Prophet was the most beloved slave of Almighty Lord. He had appointed him as the last messenger to the people. He was the torchbearer to thousands of people and light of their eyes and apple of the heart of his companions.

How it can happen to him?

He was the symbol of the power of Almighty. He had decimated the system that was opposed to that of God and had defeated the satanic powers. He had saved thousands of men and women from the darkness of polytheism and had brought them onto the way of God. Now who would guide these people? Who would guide them through rough and tough?

It would also stop the revelation from Almighty Allah. The revelation had never stopped since the creation of Adam. But from now onward nothing would be revealed to men from Allah.

When Umar heard this shocking news, he could not believe it. He thought it was the end of the world. He hurried towards the house of Aisha to know as to whether this abhorring news was true. When he reached there he saw that a piece of cloth was spread over his body.

When Umar removed the cloth from his face, he saw him motionless. Now there was nothing not to believe. He had to convince his mind that the Prophet had died. But it was the worst news of his life.

Then he went to the mosque of the Prophet. He saw people weeping inconsolably. A number of them had lost control over their tears. There was nobody who could console them. The only one who used to console them at every bad news and hardship had himself gone. No one could see the condition of his fellow Muslims.

When the news reached Abu Bakr, he was horrified. He immediately came to the mosque. There everyone was in a worse condition than the other. Everyone was weeping. He did not ask anything from anyone and went to Aisha's house. He saw that a piece

of cloth was spread over his body. He kissed his forehead and said:

"O Prophet of Allah! I sacrifice my parents over you. You were excellent in your life and you are excellent in your death also.

O Prophet of Allah! Your death has stopped the way of revelation that did not stop with the death of any other Prophet.

O Prophet of Allah! My words would not be able to fully praise your highness neither would my tears.

O Prophet of Allah! Had your demise not been of your choice, we all would have sacrificed our lives to save you. And had you not forbidden us from weeping we would have dried our eyes after pouring so much tears. But the thing that is not in our control is the fire of grief and sorrow. And this fire may not be controlled forever.

O Almighty Lord! Please convey our greetings to the Prophet.

O Muhammad! Please do remember us in the presence of your Lord. O Prophet we could not have lived, had you not left the source of inspiration and peace to fill the void in our hearts. O Allah! Please convey our message to the Prophet and strengthen the resolve inside our heart to accomplish for what he had come."

These words of Abu Bakr not only wept him, but all the people gathered there. Then he returned to the mosque of the Prophet. When he went there he saw that Umar was delivering a speech. He was trying to console the people. When Abu Bakr reached there, Umar ended his speech and people gathered around Abu Bakr. When all the people came around him, he delivered a speech that would be remembered for ages to come.

He said."

People! Had anyone worshipped Muhammad, he should know that Muhammad is dead and if one worshipped Allah, he should know that Allah is Alive. He is Eternal and death would never come to Him.

O believers! Allah had foretold the death of Muhammad, and you should not forget it in your extreme grief.

O Believers! Isn't it a satisfactory thought for us that Allah has chosen the peace and ease of Heavens than the hardship of this

world for the Prophet? He has called him from this world and has took him to the life of great respect and ease. Whoever from among you would follow the Book of Allah and the sunnah of His Prophet he would remain on the right path and he who separates it would be misguided.

O believers! Be aware of satan lest he involves you too much in the death of your Prophet and distance you from your religion.

You adopt the right way immediately to defeat the designs of the satan. And don't give him enough time to destroy your whole set up.

Then he read the following verse of the Holy Qur'an

"Muhammad is but a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. Will it be that when he dieth or is slain, ye will turn back of your heels? He who turneth back doth no hurt to Allah, and Allah will reward the thankful."

(Surah III, 144)

When Abu Bakr spoke in this way, people came to their senses. Now when the Prophet's closest companion talked of it they had to believe in the inevitable. Everyone thought as if this was revealed only that day. Now it was on every believer's lips and everyone talked o it.

The above speech of Abu Bakr opened the minds of those companions who were shattered by the tragic death of the Prophet. They came to their senses. Uthman, the companion and Prophet's son in law was also not in a good state of mind. He was inconsolable.

In Abdullah the son of Umar's words, "It was as if there were veils on our eyes and this speech removed those veils". It was not the case of him alone. All Muslims were in the same state of mind. Now they accepted the inevitable. Abu Bakr was a great source of strength for the companions at this crucial juncture. He was proving a power house of sort at this crucial juncture of the Islamic history.

Abu Bakr was not behind anyone in Prophet's love and affection. He was not behind anyone in his zeal to work for the safety

and well being of the Prophet. It has been discussed at length in the previous chapters. It was mentioned in a previous chapter that when the Prophet during the last Haj recited the following verse

"This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-Islam"

(Surah V, 3)

Abu Bakr started weeping. He was also weeping when following verse was revealed on the Prophet

"When Allah's succor and the triumph cometh. And thou seest mankind entering the religion of Allah in troops. Then hymn the praises of thy Lord, and seek forgiveness of Him. Lo! He is ever ready to show mercy."

(Surah CX)

At that time too he had become emotional as he knew that the inevitable is to happen any time soon and he was mentally prepared for the day.

It was the only reason that when everyone lost control over his heart after coming to know of the horrible news, Abu Bakr remained a powerhouse of courage and inspiration for Muslims. It was he who guided Muslims at that crucial juncture.

It was a special favor for Muslims from Almighty at that time that Abu Bakr was there to guide Muslims through at that crucial moment of Islamic history. It was Abu Bakr who saved them from an inevitable split.

The body was still covered with a piece of cloth. Umar was sitting his head bowed down. Other Muslims were weeping and mourning and Umar was trying to console them that it is the decision of Almighty. He was trying to convince that believers have to agree with Almighty God's commands and take every act from God in good stride. He had still not finished when a man came running fast. He was crying. When he saw Umar and Abu Bakr he said, "A large number of Ansar have gathered in the area of Bani Saidah. They are trying to select a caliph from among them. Come

fast otherwise there may be a big internal squabbling among Muslims. Muslims would break in different factions".

Abu Bakr and Umar hurried towards the place. Abu Ubaidah came along with them. When they reached there they saw a large number of Ansar and a few migrants hotly arguing with each other.

The trio was able to control the situation in the nick of time. They reasoned as to why the issue be resolved amicably. Finally Abu Bakr was elected the first caliph of believers and so the most contentious issue was resolved.

The respected body was still there. Number of believers present there had swelled now. They were all weeping.

When the selection of caliph was over they began the process of funeral. The Prophet's body was bathed by his son-in-law and cousin Ali and another cousin Fazal the son of Abbas. The body was then wrapped in three pieces of cloth and then all believers were called to have the last look of the Prophet and pray for him.

Believers were swarming around the body when a clear sound choked with emotions was heard. "O Messenger of Allah' God bless you. We are witness that you have propagated the message of God and worked for it relentlessly till God made it the dominant religion." It was the voice of Abu Bakr.

When men completed, women were allowed to see. Two days after his death the Prophet was buried in the grave and went out of the sight till the Day of Judgment. His grave was dug at the very same place where he had died. When the question of where to bury him cropped up, Abu Bakr said, "I have heard Prophet saying that Prophets have been buried at the very same place where they die. So the corners of the bed were marked on the ground and the bed removed and grave was prepared where his bed was. Abu Talha dug the grave. When it was complete the coffin was kept besides the grave and people were asked to come in small teams to offer prayers. The first ones to offer prayers were Abbas and the people of Hashim clan, then Muhajireen and then Ansar. Then women were allowed and were followed by children. It is said that in this way people prayed seventy two times at his grave.

When all people had offered their prayers, Abbas, Fazal bin Abbas, Qasm bin Abbas, Ali and Shaqran went in the grave and buried the Prophet. When the grave was done with Bilal sprinkled bucketful water over it. But the companions sprinkled unknown numbers of bucket from their eyes.

But these tears were not like ours that we shed in our meetings. These tears were backed by a long history of trial and struggle. These were the tears of those who had given up everything for the Prophet and were prepared every moment of their lives for the safety and well being of the Prophet. They continued to work relentlessly for the same cause even after him.

These tears were backed by the great change that these people brought in the whole world. These tears were a show of their love and trust in the Prophet and the cause he espoused for and a sort of assurance that they would continue the journey of Islam.

It was the reason that the caliph on the very next day of the Prophet's burial started sending Muslim troops to different places where they had to be at that time.

May God shower his blessings on the last Prophet who gave an inspiration to people to work for the humanity and who gave them that strength to fight for their cause.

May God also bless all those great companions of the Prophet who were full of enthusiasm and who did not rest till the message of God reached all the four corners of the world and became a dominant religion.

We should also resolve that we would live for the same cause, the same religion and would die for the same. We have to show that we are the true followers of our Prophet and torchbearer of the courage shown by his companions.